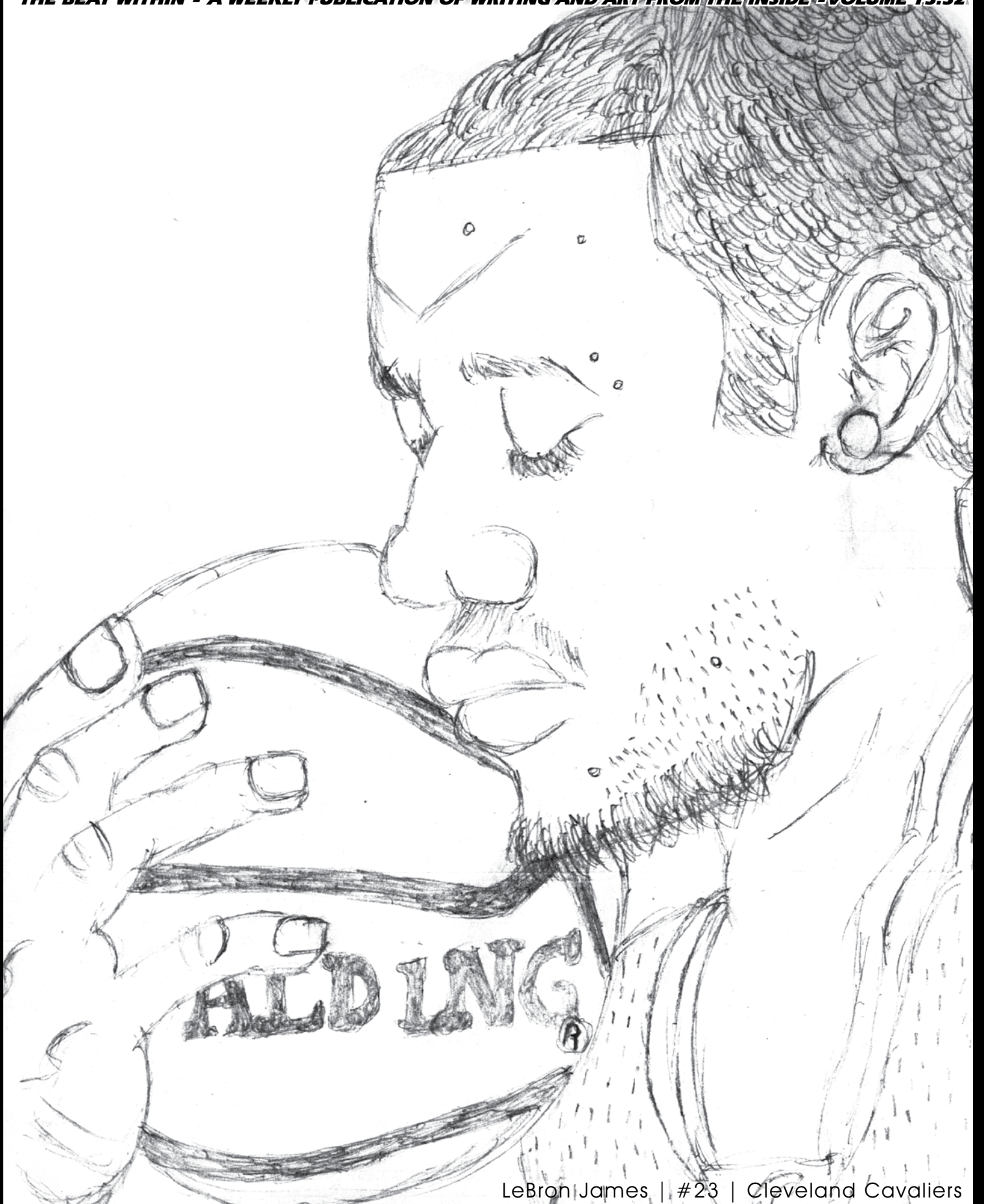


The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13:32



LeBron James | #23 | Cleveland Cavaliers

The 13.32 issue arrives in your eager hands, out of nowhere, or so it seems. We oftentimes can't believe how consistent we are! We bet some of you avid Beat readers haven't even finished reading the 13.31 issue yet!

This one issue was particularly challenging given we had to reread a number of edits, but here we are! We don't think it is going to get any easier either, especially the next couple issues, given The Beat Within is heading East to resume our work in Washington DC, with the young men at Oak Hill. This is all very exciting, but for us, a tiny program that wears many hats, it may cause a disruption in our production end.

That's OK, given this is all part of The Beat story. You all are a part of the story, the history, each and every week you participate in our writing workshops, share a piece or two of your poems, send us a letter saying hello, come to our office upon your release for a job, or simply by taking a chance and reading this latest issue. It's incredible what we have accomplished thus far!

As we say time and time again, we could never imagine in our wildest dreams where The Beat Within would be, if you had asked us back in 1996, "Where do you see The Beat Within in a dozen years, or so?" Damn, what a ride. Look where we are today! Unbelievable!

The Beat prides itself in giving you readers a non-stop read of voices, young and old, who otherwise would never have such a voice. These voices are some of the most creative and talented writers in print, anywhere in the world!

Most of these writers tell us readers as they see it. Sure, we may disagree with some of the stories that pop up in these pages, but who are we to say that what a writer has to contribute is wrong? Well, "we" are somebody to say, "Hey I disagree with that piece by so and so..." And if that's the case, we hope the writing that you disagree with will only provoke you to think — and to write a solid commentary that challenges the views of the author or this publication. Then again, like many readers, we simply keep our thoughts to ourselves and move on. Shoot, who has time to rebut!? You all do!

Anyhow, we must say, we truly do our best to read every single piece, and that is something we pride ourselves in, yet we still miss pieces, or read pieces wrong and from our mistakes feelings are hurt, or the piece may totally take on a new meaning. We want to apologize to any writers, be they the young people in the hall, elders in other institutions, counselors, parents, administrators, or members of the community who have read something in The Beat over the years, or in this latest issue, and have been offended. Sorry.

On another note, we at The Beat truly cherish the good work of the counselors who help us tremendously in paving our way inside the "golden doors" of the many juvenile halls we visit, conducting respectful workshops in the units each week. We particularly like counselors who respect the program keep their voices down during our workshops. We particularly like counselors who get involved in The Beat topic discussions and the writing portion of the class. We also like counselors who assist us in making sure that our hour plus workshop is utilized fully and respectfully. We also like counselors who give us the classroom to do workshops, if there is a classroom available, and who consistently have the young people ready for us when we arrive to facilitate our hour long workshops. We love counselors who pay attention to the young people when they read their pieces aloud at the end of the class, and applaud them when pieces merit such a response. That's the best part, thanks staff!

Our first topic is the very popular, "The worst drug". America is a drug-taking culture. All of us have been exposed to numerous drugs, from alcohol and weed to crack cocaine and meth. Some of you find yourselves fighting addictions that keep you coming back to the hall, or repeated trips to rehab. Some have lost family members and homies to drug abuse, or seen loved ones in bad drug situations. What we want to know is this: from your personal experience — meaning your own drug use, or that of family or friends, or just personal observation — what do you think the worst drug is? What examples can you give us that support your choice of the "worst" drug? What do you tell family or friends who are hooked on this drug? If you have had your own battle with drugs, tell us how you are dealing with it. Do you want to be drug-free? Alcohol free? Why or why not?

The second topic, "The last time I cried". When was the last

time you cried? We read a lot of pieces that say all your tears have dried up, but we can't believe that's true. We also know that many boys think that crying is a sign of weakness, so they won't admit they cry, for fear of being seen as weak. But if you're human, you shed tears. There are many sad things to cry about, from getting locked up to losing a family member. But there are also many joyful things that make us cry, from weddings to the birth of newborn babies. The Beat wants to know when you last shed tears. Can you give us examples of both kinds of tears: those shed in sadness and those shed in happiness?

Last but not least, "Beat Topics" — Every week, The Beat has to come up with new topics for you to write about. And every week, we get pieces that tell us our topics are lame, or that you're "not feeling the topics." So, this is your opportunity to list topics for our consideration. We can't promise that any particular topic will be used, but we can promise you that we will read all of them, looking for those that would make good pieces for The Beat. Don't put down nonsense topics; give us real topics you would like to write about. The more, the merrier.

Before we close this editors note, allow us to give a shout out to all the amazing help that has walked through our door this summer. We cannot stress enough how wonderful you young Beat colleagues have been, and there's plenty too! Props to the following who have stepped up way beyond our expectations, and that's Justine, Michaela, Laura, Samantha, Brenda and Karla, you all have done outstanding work in helping make The Beat Within an even stronger program than it already is. We know many of you will be heading back to school soon, yet, if you can manage your time, we do hope The Beat will still play a part of your lives. Thank you again for your great work! See you soon.



The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Omar Turcios

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Carolyn Goossen, Jill Wolfson, Allan Martinez, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clarke, Brittany Bernard, Alex Moe, Hanif Bey, Brenda Navarro, Samantha Navarro, Victor Peterson, Laura Vitaro, Justine Palefsky, Karla Serrano, Alissa Blackman, Angel Ryono, Elizabeth Crawford, Morghan Velez Young, Michaela Levin, Kolby Hanson, Sam Peterson, Kim Nelson, Alfredo Garcia, Mai Devavana, Lauren Stroud, Oscar Peña Jr., Julia Scheinbeim, Ava Benezra and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecwski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Carissa Allen, Antoinette Flores, Mr. B., Tammie Utter, D. Scott Herrmann, Connie Pyburn, Ph. D. Clinical Director, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County Juvenile Detention & Youth Services Center Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz, Fresno, Solano, Oak Hill in Washington DC, Monterey, and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org
www.myspace.com/theofficialbeatwithin

Editor's Note

2

Pieces Of The Week

4

Co-Pieces Of The Week

15

Standouts

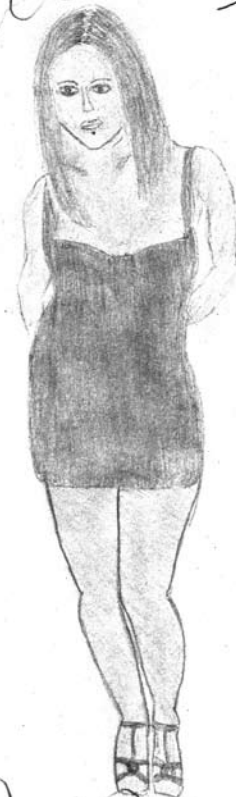
21

<i>Solano</i>	21
<i>Alameda</i>	24
<i>San Francisco</i>	38
<i>Santa Clara</i>	42
<i>New Mexico</i>	51
<i>Marin</i>	52
<i>Santa Cruz</i>	53

The Beat Without

54

Beat



Within

One Drink At A Time

I think the worst drug is heroin because you can overdose on your first try. But if you survive and you become addicted, then you won't be able to just stop. You would have to slowly stop taking it because your body becomes dependent on this drug, unlike other drugs where it's just your mind that thinks it depends on them.

As for me, the only drug it's hard for me to stop taking is alcohol. The thing is that I stop drinking, but even if I drink a little I would keep drinking for weeks until my family would step in and stop me. They say I have to be able to control my drinking habits. It was hard, but I got better at it.

It's not as bad as it used to be. Now if I have a drink, I can truly limit myself to one drink. I want to be drug free so I can be a good role model to my son. That way, he won't have the problems I do.

-Unknown, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Heroin probably is "the worst drug" for some people, but for other people, other drugs are just as bad or worse. (Meth destroys your brain and is highly addictive, for example.) But we're most interested in how you took control over your alcohol consumption. We're proud of you for that. To be honest, we've seen more tragedy and devastation come out of a bottle than from any pill or shot. The longer you drink, the harder to stop, so you're way ahead of the game if you stay in control of this problem.

The Symbolism Of A Tear

Today is another day close to my sentencing. I'm not going to lie, I'm nervous as hell. But I can't let fear rule my life, especially in here because that's the number one way to show weakness.

But onto the topic of tears. Yeah, many people may say that you're weak 'cause you cry, but to me, that's just a sign that we are all human. We may walk different paths, but our destination is the same: Happiness.

The last time I cried was in here because I found out that my Auntie had cancer and my cousin got shot. Plus, my other cousin went to jail for shooting someone. The thing that hurt me the most is the knowledge that I obtained through those people. I say that because if you notice, I lost two people that were very close to me to the streets as well as the system, and I know that I can't do nothing about it. I can't be there to be not only one of the strong providers that my family raised me to be, but also to give strength and words of encouragement to my lil' brothers and sisters as well as my daughter who needs me the most.

Every time I look at her pictures, it brings tears to my eyes of both joy and pain. Joy because I see her beautiful smile, and pain because I missed her first everything — her first word, her first step, her first tooth, But I promised her I would never leave and not come back... leave her without a father like my dad did to me.

Tears and pain are helpful. They help you grow. But I forced my pain and hurt away, because it's easy to point the blame, but nobody ever wants to face their pain. But to me, facing your pain helps you get past what hurt you, and you become a better person. But for every tear I shed, I figured that's a dream for my daughter, and no matter how hard I have to work, it will come true because now I'm not just living for me but also for my daughter.

-Savage, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The fact that you can admit that you cry tells us not that you're weak, but that you're strong enough to embrace your humanity. We can understand why you cry when you look at your daughter's picture, and we hope that motivation alone is enough to change the course that has led you here. You need her, as you've written, but she needs you much more. Yes, you've lost those "firsts" forever, but being there to guide and protect her must still be your number one priority. Cling to each other, and both your lives will be immeasurably enriched.

Once A fool Of a Father

Well I guess you can say my daddy's a fool. He got locked up a little after my first birthday, so I never had a real dad.

He was young, I understand, but he still could have wrote or called me. I used to go and visit him and he never had anything to say. He never said "sorry" for not being there or never showed remorse to my mom for her being the only parent who took care of me.

About two years ago, my dad got out of prison from a thirteen year sentence, and has tried real hard to patch his and my relationship up.

Being a father rather than a fool, he's told me he was sorry for not being there and has made it up to me. Now he's involved in my life more then ever, so I've earned respect for him.

I've realized people make mistakes and I'm happy my dad snapped and turned from a fool to a father.

-Christiana, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: This is good to hear that your father changed his ways and made a better life for himself. It is too bad that it took him 13 years to realize this, but it sounds like you are happy with him in your life now. We hope your relationship with your dad (and mom) continues to grow.

The Last Time I Cried Was Today

The last time I cried was today. I was talking about my case. My mom was confused why I had two attempted murders. Our conversation got serious. I kept on saying, "I'm going to do 15-20 years."

My mom said, "No, everything is going to be alright."

When my visit was over I went to give my pops a huge kiss. I did, but he didn't want to let go. He just started to break down. Then my mom came to hold both of us. I just started crying. It hurts me to know that I'm going to waste many years of my life, and I keep on hurting my loved ones. But I guarantee, in the end I'm be a changed man. When you see me ten years from now, I will be living my life happy and with my family.

-Inthavong, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Being locked up doesn't only affect you, it affects your whole family and all who care for you. It's important to realize the impact your situation has on your parents, and use that as motivation to turn things around and lead a better life when you get the chance. They love you so much. Work hard when you get out to make the best of the years you have with your family. What specific things do you need to change to make sure you don't end up arrested? What can you do or think about while you're still locked up to help make this come true?

An Empty Soul

The day she passed away my life felt like a knot undone.

It hurt me so much because I lost a loved one.

Two weeks and three days old when my little baby daughter's body turned cold.

My heart is full off hurt.

Unable to contain and withhold my mind.

Barrier, almost like a stronghold.

Unable to teach my little daughter the beauties of life, almost because God took a piece of my life.

It feels as if I'm wearing a jacket without any seams, not knowing that this is harder then it seems.

Only to say, "rest in piece in heaven until we can meet again one day."

-Lil' Lonely, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We at The Beat are sorry to hear about the loss of your child. The best thing you can do now is talk about it, don't keep something like this bottled up inside because all it will do is tear you apart.

The Worst Drug. My Story

The year 2006, summer time, in Gilroy California, that' was the time I started using "the worst drug" "Crystal Meth."

Meeting hundreds of people made me feel popular, but I then realized that it wasn't the "people" who made me feel that way, it was the "drug".

I went from "bad" to "worse", "dumb" to "dumber", and from weed and alcohol, to crystal and crack.

During my younger ages I grew up with my favorite Uncle while he was smoking Meth, going In-and-out of jail/prison every other time he was out. I saw all the things he's done to his mom/ which is my grandma and promised myself that I will never enter that path.... I was wrong.

I one day entered the 'Devils layer', and met his demands becoming friends with them all, offering me drugs making me feel part of the team, made me start getting my own evil thoughts. Before I know it, time flew, while I was away from my family when they were just up the street the whole time never coming home.

I hit stage nine out of ten, and started stealing from loved ones, and store businesses until the day I stole from my little brother, that hurts me so much now. I took and sold his "Nintendo Wii" That I had got him for Christmas. I sold it for drugs, obviously, and ended up having court the next day, forgetting that I did, not looking so good. I entered the Juvenile Hall Court room talking to my attorney. When he had told me that I was going to be talking and I realized all the bad things I have done in the past, all the people I hurt and all the things I've stole these whole two years, it hurts me!

I'm now here writing about what the drug has done to my life.

-Albert, Santa Clara

From the Beat: Thank you! We thank you so much for keeping it so real and letting the world know from an stand point of experience why they should stay away from drugs and all its elements. What is it going to take for the world to see the light? What will it take you to fully recover?

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried was when I was reading this book and there was a scene where this man was beating his girlfriend up. He beat her to death. It made me cry because it brought back bad memories. I was remembering when I was in an abusive relationship. I thought about how the man in the book beat her to death, and that could have been me. I was thinking, if I was still in that relationship, where would I be today? Dead? Alive? In the hospital? I was just remembering all the physical abuse and verbal abuse and I thank God I'm still alive.

To all the ladies out there in abusive relationships, get out while you can. Don't be scared to ask for help. If he says he loves you, that's a lie. No one who loves you would want to hurt you physically... even mentally. He hit me every day I was with him.

Some ask, "Why didn't you just leave?" It wasn't that easy. He had me under his eye every milli-second. I probably would have killed him to get away, if the police wouldn't have pulled us over.

-Tercha, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is such an important message for young women to read and to absorb. We hate that so many young (and not so young) men think that hitting a woman makes them important or "in charge," when what it really shows is that they are still stuck in their little-boy minds and have never matured. We are so glad that you got out while you could, before you did something that could have ended your freedom forever!

The Person Inside

I need a voice, 'cause when I yell no one hears. I need a soul, 'cause it feels like no one is inside. I'm in a place that I can't escape. I can't breathe. It feels like no air. I'm all alone....

I give so much, and in return, I get handfuls of hurt and cups of hate. I'm always in the dark and never the light. I sit back and watch the world no one around me, unable to think, unable to talk. Things happen and I just bottle it in, unable to feel until I explode with no warning or caution.

Death talks to me. Sometime I answer back. It tells me to come be with it and I will feel pain no more, I ask myself what to do, but it's cold inside and I answer myself.... One time soon, but not today. I will not go, for my work is not done and I need peace, joy and love, and time to grow.

-Not Signed, San Francisco

From the Beat: What a pity that we don't know who wrote this powerful piece. We don't know what "work" you have to finish, but if it is keeping you alive, we hope you never finish it! Even when you're feeling hopeless and empty, you have to remember that you won't always feel this way. You just have to have faith that tomorrow will be different from yesterday. Death is permanent. Your situation is temporary. Don't forget!

The Worst Drug

The worst drug to me is meth and alcohol. Also pills, because they are bad for your brain and back. Meth messes up everything in your body so they give you methadone to relax you. If you stop using meth you will have seizures and break out in cold sweats.

All the above, that stuff ain't cool. I will never try it. All that really ain't cool real talk.

Alcohol ain't not joke either because that stuff messes up your liver. And all that stuff that it has in it. You try to stop, you have similar symptoms as doing drugs and that is many.

-Bv, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are so right, both in your description of what meth does and in your very intelligent decision never to try it. We've just finished reading a book ("Beautiful Child"), which tells the story of a meth addict from the father's viewpoint. It's very scary and very sad. What's your relationship with alcohol? We see what devastation it brings to so many, and how many crimes begin with getting drunk!

Meth Is The Worst

The drug I think is the worst is meth. I chose meth 'cause someone in my 'hood was hooked on it, and it made her life worst as possible. Before she had knew about the drug, she had everything, from a house, cars, and even a good job.

Then one day, she met a guy who messed up her life and introduced her to the drug meth. And now all she do is lay around her mom's house and do nothing 'cause she can't control her body 'cause she is so addicted to it and can't stop.

In my opinion, I want to be drug and alcohol free. I would choose that 'cause it can mess your life up like the story I told you. And why waste so much money on something that last for 10 minutes when you can buy something that can help you instead of buying something that can mess your life up. So that was my opinion on drugs.

-Drug And Alcohol Free, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We had to give you a new Beat name since we don't allow numbers in the names we use. We really like how you laid this out. We hope your friend regains control of her life, but meth is a very, very hard drug to kick. There is a great book by the father of a "meth-head" called "Beautiful Child" that is both frightening and very sad to read.

Don't Use Drugs

I choose drugs to be my topic because, in my own words, I think some people should take drugs because some of it is medication. And also I think people should stop using drugs because it is bad for your lungs and other parts of your body.

If you use too much drugs at one time you can die of an overdose, and if you use it too much in one day it come back to you and can cause heart attack or stroke and other heart problems.

As most people know drugs are very bad for you and you should not take them.

I also know most of you think that what I'm saying about not using drugs is bullshhh, but if you listen to my advice on not using drugs I guarantee you that your life will get turned around.

For example, saving more money, your body function will be better, and many more great things. Those are some examples. But what I meant by saving more money is that you will not have to spend your money on any drugs, and when you do drugs you always get hungry so that's what I meant by that. Oh, and your body functions will get going better 'cause you will not always be high and you will be able to do sports and many more without running out of breath. SO STOP USING DRUGS PLEASE!!!!!!

-Dominic, Alameda

From The Beat: You're right Dominic, there are so many reasons to not do drugs. Not only is it about avoiding the negatives, but it's also about creating more positives for yourself, like you said. Increasing physical health and moderating food are much easier to do when sober. Thanks for the advice, hopefully readers will listen too!

Thizz Or Die

When I was 16, my grandfather died. I admit that I cried. I couldn't sleep that night when I heard that he died. I couldn't go see him because he was in another state. That made me more upset, so I turned to ecstasy. From then on, I took ecstasy daily. It went on for about three months of non-stop abusing the pulls. I did not waste money for the pill because I had my connects.

When I started, I took only one pill each day... until I got to my second week. During the second week, my body did not react to one, so I started taking two. As the days passed by quickly, I started taking more and more. I was still depressed, and did not think about what the pills could do to my brain. Every time I took the pulls, the days went faster and faster.

Two months passed, and that's when I realized that each day I popped, I was popping about four or five pills a day. I didn't really care because the thought of my grandpa passing away, I kept getting angry and emotional.

The third month came by, and I was still poppin' pills. I suddenly knew it was going to get me nowhere, but six feet under. In that three-month period, I think my pill count was at least 300. That is a big number, and I knew I had to stop. So I did. That goes to show that drugs don't move you on, but it can bury you six feet deep and hurt the ones you love.

RIP Grandpa. We miss and love you!

-Avalani, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Actually, your title doesn't reflect what you've written. A better title for this fine piece of writing (and thinking) would be, "Don't Thizz And Live"... We admire how well you explained the way drugs can take over your daily activities, little by little, until you are enslaved by the drug. And, once hooked, you begin giving yourself "reasons" to use that are no more than excuses to be able to get high. You are very lucky and a very strong individual. Your grandpa would be very proud of you for quitting your addiction, cold turkey. We hope you live a long, drug and prison free life, and keep the memory of your grandpa alive and well.

Why Cry Now?

This is weak

All my little readers need to peak

You whining now, then stay out the streets

You don't listen to your PO or parents, so now I'ma teach

You don't wanna hear it right, you want them to beast

Came back to the halls mad

You keep coming back, you must be glad

Then starting crying, becoming sad

Get released, start back doing bad

But to get back to the subject, why cry now

I don't cry no more while I keep coming back

It's not a surprise, so why get myself down

It let my happiness die

You gonna change, stop with the lies

And complaining and explaining come up with ties

So I'ma be fine.

But why do the crime if you can't do the time?

-Caprice, San Francisco

From the Beat: We love this little poem, but we think we have an even more basic question than the one you ended with: "Why do the crime even IF you can do the time?"

From Low To High To Low

Most kids will tell you that their problem is drugs, violence, death, or as simple as fighting with their girl. Me on the other hand, every last one of those problems occur in my life every single day.

Now some people may disagree with what I'm about to say, but my biggest problem is my addiction to my fast money. It all started about three years. Before, I was completely dependent on my mom, who played both mom and dad in my life. So you could imagine how hard it was for her. I guess the pressure just smacked her like a hit from Brian Dawkins. So she started falling back into drugs.

Slowly and slowly we started to lose everything. First, we lost our house. Then after that, my little brother's dad took him away from us. We were living in my mom's car. I hated my mom for these things because she didn't realize that because of her, I lost my life.

That's when I decided to take things into my own hands. I asked one of my older homies to front me. He gave me a 8-Ball, and to my surprise, that was gone pretty quick. Then I realized I might be putting someone in the same position as me.

By then, I made enough money to go to business myself, but I decided to sell somethin' less harmful. I copped two ounces of the best weed I could get my hands on. Before I knew it, I was sellin' pounds. I thought I had it set. Then that's when everything started goin' wrong again.

I started thinking my friends were just there because I had all this. I started hearing people talking behind my back, sayin' I'm greedy, I'm selfish, I'm a jerk. All these problems started falling on my head. Then one day I go to sell a pound, and I ended up selling myself a one-way ticket to the cell I'm in today.

The basis of my story is not to let materialistic things get in the way of what's important to you.

-Don, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've done such a good job of laying out the steps that led you here. The only thing we disagree with is your statement that you sold yourself a "one-way ticket to the cell..." Actually, it's a round-trip ticket. You will walk out of here and you will resume your life. The only question is, will you go back to the life that put money in your pocket at first, but ended putting money in the system's pocket, or will you use that intelligence and insight to prepare yourself for a productive life in freedom? You hold the answer in your own hands.

The Last Time I Cried

The last few times I cried was when I first got in here. When I got in here, I felt like me and my girl are spreading away from each other. I got in here on Friday, July 11th, wait out my time until August 12th.

I also cried from hearing news about my family passing away, like four days ago. I mostly cry out about my girl for not being right here next to me where I can cuddle with her.

Another thing is that I missed out two funerals of my family, and my sister having her first baby girl. I felt more like I cannot live anymore, but I ain't quitting.

When I get released again, I will go for my GED and pass it to get to college. For my future, I will apply for jobs that I can work in for a good amount of money so I can support my family and my future special someone.

-Goofy, San Francisco

From The Beat: These are good reasons to shed tears. When you get out, you have to choose between doing the things that bring you here and your girl. Obviously, you can't have both, which is why you're feeling so bad now. As for your GED, we applaud your decision to go for it and give yourself a better foundation for your future. But why wait until you get released? You can work on your GED right now, right here!

The Worst Drug

Damn! Another week up in here...

This week's topic is the worst drug. To me, the worst drug is power. That's the worst drug because they put everything behind when they get power. Let's say your friend gets promoted, and before he got promoted, y'all was best friends.

But now since he has gotten the promotion, he starts to forget about you and he starts to be with the big people. He takes advantage of people just to use them. Every once in a while he will call you just to use you and others. But be smart and alert and try to see those people before you fully trust that person.

-Wiggims, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may have selected the one addiction at the heart of all others — the pursuit of power. As we've noted before, more than 100 years ago, a British historian and philosopher named Lord Acton, wrote: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Because of this belief, he concluded that "Great men are almost always bad men." Do you agree with him?

The Worst Drug In The World

I would say the worst drug is heroin. I think heroin is the worst because once someone uses it it's nearly impossible to get off.

I've seen heroin addicts shoot the stuff most of the time, it's nearly impossible to get off. I know a few people who have gotten off the drug. They say they have to get fluid sucked from their hearts with big long needles.

Another reason why I think it's bad is because some needles that they use don't always be clean. This can cause diseases such as STDs, HIV, AIDS, and because of that I'm scared to use any drug.

I experimented with marijuana a few times, really didn't like how it made me feel, so I didn't use it anymore. That's when I used to hang with older guys and got under peer pressure. Hanging with the wrong crowd and messing with drugs got me where I am today, so if you're reading this, stay away from drugs.

-Ray, Alameda

From The Beat: You bring up some really serious issues in this piece. The risks involved in using dirty needles along with the dangers of the drug itself makes heroin one of the most hazardous drugs to involve yourself with. We're glad you've made the choice to stay away from drugs, and hope others heed your advice and listen to the issues you've written about.

Losing My Best Friend

The last time I cried was about a year and a half ago when one of my homies passed in a car accident. He was like a brother to me. You would have never ever seen us apart. I never thought I would lose him and if I did, I never knew what I was going to do without him.

I remember when we decided to get into the varrio, and we got jumped in. Me and him were supposed to grow up together, you know. I don't know why they had to take him away from me. Why did it have to be him? The first time I did drugs was with him. The first time I stole cars was with him. When I'll get down, he will be the next to me backing me up. And I did the same for him.

He used to call me every day in the morning and ask me what I was doing. I would tell him, "Getting ready for school," and he would tell me, "I'm outside, I came to pick you up so we can kick it." And I would say, "Screw it! Let's go to the varrio," or "Let's go look for trouble."

After he passed away, I used to wake up in tears. I didn't know what to do. I wish he was still with me. I miss him a lot. I still got a lot of love for him. I will never forget him. This is for my homie Criminal. I know your looking down at us from up above. May you Rest In Paradise.

-Silencer, Santa Clara

From the Beat: We're sorry for your loss. But we hope that you'll look carefully at how you're living your life, because it would be a double tragedy if you lost your freedom permanently (or worse) by doing the things that you and he did together — like steal cars and take drugs. As long as you are in this world, he is too, in your heart and mind. Keep him there.

Back On A Warrant

I was released from YA on march 28, 2008. after doing my time, which was one year and six months. I supposed that was enough time for me. I told myself leaving the gates I was through with the jail life. But at the same time, something within me still wanted to get back into that criminal life style. So a couple days went by, and I started back smoking weed and staying out late. Then from that I started doing other drugs of my choice, which was ecstasy and coke. At the same time, I was out committing crimes and going back into that careless attitude.

Then later into being out as far as free, my PO warned me that I needed to start taking care business because she was looking for my placement. So at that point I told myself I was going to get it together, but still choose to get into more trouble. So I caught a misdemeanor case which was stealing out the mall. At that point I thought it was over, so I planned in my head that if they let me go as far as police, then I would go on the run because I had it in my head that my PO was for sure going to lock me up.

So that was my plan. But before making this decision, I called my PO and told her the problem and why I did what I did. And she told me she was going to put me in a group home for 60 days because of this. But I didn't want to go to the group home because if I wasn't following my mama's rules, then why would I most certainly follow a stranger rule? So I just didn't go see my PO, and went on the run. Then later a couple of weeks I was riding my bike going to a girl house, and the police pulled me over because I ran a red light. They arrested me 'cause I had a warrant for not checking in.

-Unsigned, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for telling us your story. Why do you think you continue getting caught up in that lifestyle? And what makes it so difficult to leave it behind? It seems like this latest lock-up experience is entirely of your own making. You made a calculated and conscious choice, and now you are paying the consequences.

Lost In My Thoughts

Lost in my thoughts.
What is this pain?
I feel no sympathy, I feel no shame.
Running from what? Running to what?
It's not me, it's my life that is corrupt.
This temptation, these desires,
Methamphetamine taking me higher...
And higher.
Looking at everyone- their emotions numb,
Seeing their glass eyes from my heart.
I'm a witness of the soldiers' silent cries.
I don't know how but somehow
My golden wings were broken,
Even my spirit stolen.
In the dark I laid
And with my shadow I played.
What I got tired I sat down and prayed
To be alone. I was not afraid,
Just lost in my thoughts.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow! This is a great expression of what you've been through. It is so important to realize that even though your experiences and your life up to this point has been a struggle, you are not corrupt. You have the ability and strength to turn things around and change your circumstances. We are very proud of you for your determination to pull yourself out of your "corrupt life" and to use your challenges to help others. You're on your way.

My Glory

I write this Beat for the thugs
who's running the streets and desperate for love
I have these dreams that's weird
and my life going down the wrong path, so it need to be steered
I cry for the pain
I get on my knees and pray in Jesus' name
I tell the old me that I'm really gone miss you
and I stress with a hundred million issues
and I put my hand on my heart and say rest in peace
for all the love ones I lost in these Oakland streets

- Young Marco, Alameda

From The Beat: We feel your pain. So much loss. We want to see you steering your life down a good path, healthy and alive and doing good in the world. Stay focused, hold onto your faith, and find ways to follow through. You piece inspired us, so here's something for you: We like your rap/ We really can't find anything that it lacks/ You are more than just another youth that's writing/ Your words hit hard like Tyson/ We hope that you keep your words and ears to the streets/ And other people raps never start biting.

Hook On Heroin

The worst drug I've came across on the streets is heroin.
I was hooked on it because of the people I hung around with.

Older people from older gangs just don't care, they will watch me go to jail because of it, and they won't be there for me. Telling me what to do, who to go jack, I've done it so bad, too much, I feel like I can't go back.

They say the streets eat you up and spit you back out. I live on the streets; I know the drugs, people, and everything I know and what it's about.

-Tweety, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's sad to hear that you have had to live a life on the streets, and do all you have done. Tweety, we at The Beat have many of your pieces, and we are sure we have asked this question before but we'll ask it again. Where are your mother and father? Do you not have other family that you could live with to help you stay off the streets? It's time to change your ways before something serious happens to you.

Who's To Blame

Burnt souls, nothing to ease the blow
Gotta know who's real and who's foe
Low self esteem, probably means I'm low on gasoline
I don't know how much longer I'll be able to be a be longer,
Or should I say a survivor, sad as it is now
I have better chance of surviving in Iraq than on these streets...
Wow!
How black!
It's amazing how one stat can out a ninja flat on his back
Like a train track
Now I'm off track going in circles, labeled insane
Shhh! Who's to blame
They say I can't be tamed, but all they want is the fame.
Who cares about me , just leave me in the blame
Or should I say "slow lane"
Rain drops on me all day
Even in the sunlight. I got a cloud over me
Keeping me in the dark, with the sharks
Waiting to get incarcerated
Then the cycle's repeated

-D-Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't think you are to blame for the things that happened to you when you were too young to control events in your life. But that time is passing. You are standing at the door of your future as a young man who can take the control you lacked and turn things around. If the cycle of fast lane and pain and blame keep repeating, then it's time

I Love My Freedom, Period!

The last time I cried was when I came back to the hall.
This isn't the life being in here because you have to do what other people say to do, and that ain't cool to me. I like to do what I want to. I love to get up whenever I want to. I love my freedom period.

I love being with my family. I miss them so much that I cry damn near every night because I am not there with them. This is going to be my last and final time coming here because hopefully I am going to ROP. I am going to do my programs and be home and stay home and stay out of trouble.

Thank you Beat! Until the next time.

-Twin, Alameda

From The Beat: We love to read that you love your freedom. Too many young people we meet seem to love other things more than the gift of freedom. But you have to be careful how you use freedom because if it's not used responsibly, it's easy to lose! Stay true to your word and make this your last lock-up. Good luck. We need soldiers like you to lead the way.

A Painful Sad Risk

I got hurt while on the outs by a guy I thought I knew and I guess I was wrong. He hurt me in a way I never thought I would get hurt, but now that it happened, life doesn't really matter. I got hurt and no one knows but me.

I told a guy to buy me alcohol, and he did. He was already messed up but after he bought the alcohol, we went to his place. He parked, we drank, he got out of the car, walked to my side, got on top of me, and did things I didn't want him to do. It still hurts to this day.

-Katy, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: The hurt and pain you feel may never go away completely, but you must talk to someone so you can better understand this hurt you feel. Has this person been turned over to the law enforcement? If not, maybe he should be, because if he's done it once, he will do it again. Don't let this happen to someone else.

How I Feel

What's good with The Beat. I'm in this boring-ass place holdin' it down. But yeah, I'ma write about how I feel bein' in here.

I feel like, to hell with all this jailhouse shhh. I'm ready to get on. I been in here for too long... longer than everybody in this unit. Bein' in jail ain't cool at all. You really gotta have patience bein' up in here, especially with some of these staff. They really be feelin' like they somebody in here, talking to you any kind of way and don't expect a trill ninja like me to bank they shhh.

But that's not the only reason jail ain't coo'. You be missin' yo' family. Me, I really miss my lil' bra and lil' sis. I'm usually there for them and if somebody was to do something to them while I'm in here, I can't do shhh, and that shhh hurt. A ninja be dry missin' his girl fo' real.

When I get out, I'ma make sure I don't come back because I'm really missin' out on hella shhh and it's crazy because I'm makin' these people statistics true.

But yeah, I'm out, man. I'ma keep it all the way real every time. Bet!

-Trill, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you really take your own words seriously because you're right, you're missing out on a whole lot. And just think how much your little brother and sister are missing out by now having you there to guide and protect them. You've hurt yourself and them by allowing the system to take you, but you can undo that temporary hurt by doing what you promise in this piece. Don't do anything you wouldn't want your little brother or sister to be doing, because they will be looking to see what you do so they can follow...

METH Is Death

The worst drug by far is meth.

It hurts you worse than all the rest.

No other high can even contest, unfortunately, I liked that drug the best.

Everyday I railed, I smoked, paralyzed by headaches until the next day's toke.

Dropped out of school, for a permanent stroke.

I did it all - was a typical "tweaker" - smoking the bushes,

not once feeling meeker.

And slowly I realized I became weaker.

The pipe stopped tasting more and more sweeter.

No longer second guessed every look, every hug.

Wiped off my constant paranoid mean mug.

Meth by far is the worst drug.

-I Know, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Terrific poem. We're glad we can help you share this.

The Safest Place

My safest is when

I'm asleep I can be anything

I want and anywhere I want

It's dark. It's cold but

Then there's light. I'm in a world

That is free, speak what you

Feel touch what you want

Get shot, won't die in a world

Of no pain

-Lil' Tone, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really good poem. Thanks for sharing it with us. We can imagine the sleeping world does feel more safe than the waking world much of the time. There, even scary things don't necessarily result in real world consequences. At the same time, sleeping and dreams often help a person deal with the tough realities of the daytime world. Are there any waking choices you can make that change your personal life or help the situation in your community, that could help the waking world feel a little more safe?

The Worst Drug

My worst drug is my anger because it leads me to do things that I would never do when I'm calm. For example, there was one day where everything was going good for me. I was doing good, taking care of business. I received a call from somebody that was very enraging to me.

At that point I lost total control of what I was doing. It was like if I was blind with anger that I ended up hurting a lot of people that I really care about.

-The Rebellious One, San Francisco

From The Beat: We have experienced the this "drug" from both sides (we also have issues with anger), and we think you're right. Anger that turns to rage is a drug, because once you reach that point of no control, there are chemical changes occurring in your brain just like when you take certain drugs. We hope you learn strategies to check that temper before you do something that you'll regret forever.

As I Lay To Sleep

As God lays me down to sleep

I see my homeboys feeling down with grief.

I won't go down for some beef.

I'll go down in my death bed sound asleep.

But the life I chose, it winds up that way -

So that's why I keep my head up.

I keep walking anyway.

I have a 6 kreasing up my clothes.

As you can see. Mobbin' in my town

'Til someone puts me down in my deathbed.

Can't you see that's where I'll be.

That's where I'll be,

That's my opinion

On how my life will be.

Maybe.

-Ernesto, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Great work Ernesto. Remember that last word - maybe. You may have seen your share of violence and disappointment, seen your friends struggling and even dying, but you don't have to choose that for your future. Your life can be different. It is possible.

The Worst Drug

There's all kinds of drugs out there, whether it's alcohol, pot, to the heavy narcotics. I myself smoke weed here and there, and occasionally drink once in a while. But for me, it's not a big problem.

I don't think I have an addictive personality. My cousin, however, let drugs get the best of him. He was born in Mexico but raised in San Jose since he was a baby. But he grew up around gang lifestyles and took the wrong path. By the time he was sixteen, he ended up in CYA for attempted murder. Afterwards, he got shipped to prison. But when he got out, he didn't stay out.

He would still be doing drugs and going back to jail... until he got his citizenship taken away and was forced to live in Mexico. It was just hard out there, especially because he left his son and wife behind. He started all over though, got himself a new girl and a baby daughter. But still on drugs, when one day, high out of his mind, he committed suicide.

I learned a lesson from his mistakes: Drugs are bad! So if you want to get hooked on drugs, expect the worst. But to my primo (cousin), I'll meet you in our afterlife, bro! Wherever it may be. Rest In Paradise Carnal (bro).

-Smirk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hate reading these stories of young people who think taking drugs is a joke, until the joke turns into a nightmare. We're glad that you can drink and smoke in moderation (though we still caution that a single drunken episode or under-the-influence event can turn bad). We're very sorry about your cousin, and we're sorry, too, for the two families he left fatherless...

Blood Of Fallen Brothers

The sharp cracking of Chris's M-16 echoes through the dense moist forest in the La Drang Valley. The sweat beaded and flowed down his face. He sat quietly on a termite hill. A small NVA in a khaki outfit stepped cautiously out from the underbrush.

Chris could see the large bulky ak-47 cradled in his arms. Chris knew about the rifles, big and heavy, but he knew those Vietnamese boys knew how to use them. He raised his weapon and aimed for the small patch on the soldier's left lung area. The bolt snapped back and the expelled shell almost struck him in the face. He saw the man crumple into the waist high grass. Chris looked over the small mound in front of him and almost immediately he could see orange muzzle fire and the popping of multiple small arms. The tracer rounds slammed into the ground around his position. He grabbed the m60 from its resting place inside its hole. The long complicated string of shells made it even more difficult to fire.

The roar was tremendous, he could feel the movement reverberate through his body. One by one the orange light minimized to an occasional flash. Chris's partner, Sgt. Mike Taylor, was laying severely wounded with a shrapnel puncture to the neck. Chris had done all he could by supplying multiple morphine shots, and he did numerous attempts to stop the bleeding. But now Taylor, "TY" as Chris called him, was leaning against an ammunition box gurgling and fighting for life. Chris could hear the thumping of the 2 bladed "huey" transport helicopter. He strapped the m16 to his tactical vest and slung his wounded partner on to his shoulders in a fireman's carry. Tyler groaned and spewed blood on Chris's back. The warm wet liquid seeped into his bones, the LZ "landing zone" was even worse than Chris had thought. The dirt had turned a slight red from the many wounded. Chris ran towards the helicopter and placed Ty in the back. He backed away as the bird lifted and soared away. His whole body shuddered violently he staggered to a foxhole and slumped in exhaustion.

The cold muzzle of his rifle was soothing against his head. He knew that he had to go back to his post, but the comfort of the hole was overwhelming, he popped a few caffeine pills and sprinted back to his position. A lieutenant had taken his machine gun and was spitting out molten metal at the trees in front of him. Chris dived and slammed into the ground next to the gun.

The man stuck out his hand and behind a mouthful of tobacco he yelled "hey, I'm Jimmy." Not even bothering to stop shooting, he spat a heap of brown liquid. He had a full round face hidden behind a thick brown beard. His bushy eyebrows shielded his eyes from view. A bullet whizzed by, he ducked and started shooting while screaming obscenities. Chris concluded that he had the vocabulary of a 19th century sailor. Chris picked up an m79 grenade launcher and shot 2 rounds into the grass. A white flash followed by a deafening explosion of the grenade sent on n.v.a.'s mangled body flying through the air. Chris made multiple runs to and from his position to get ammunition for the hungry m60. By that time Jimmy had used all of his tobacco and now stuffed a stubby thick cigar into his yellow teeth. It was nightfall when the battle started to pick up. The orange glow of Jimmy's cigar radiated throughout the hole. The deafening whistle of a mortar round caused Chris to flinch.

"I'll give three frag grenades for two of your willie petes." Yelled Jimmy. White phosphorous -- or willie petes, distributed a sticky burning substance onto the enemy. Chris had seen what the grenades do, the horrible sound

of someone screaming in agony trying to get the glue-like substance off. Chris handed the horrible devices to Jimmy, he couldn't stand what he saw. The twisted contorted grin on Jimmy's face was revolting, he must think this is a game.

An advance of soldiers brought Chris back to focus. Twenty or thirty men burst from the trees and shot randomly in their direction. Chris rolled toward the machine gun and loaded a new crate ammo in. the rounds slammed into the fragile bodies of the advancing soldiers. Jimmy laughed as a soldier's head exploded violently. He took out his burning cigar and flicked it at a man with no legs crawling in the grass. Chris felt almost to the point of crying. His eyes stung with fury and madness.

Jimmy had finally moved to a different hole now that his machine gun jammed. Though the foul stench of his evil still lingered in the area. Chris stuck his k-bar into the open action and pried out the stubborn cartridge, Chris could hear the demented laughter of Jimmy over the roar of a machine gun. Chris laid on his side and popped open a c-ration. The cold peaches tasted sweet and clung to the sensitive buds on his tongue. Chris shot a few rounds into a nearby tree and watched a sniper fall and bounce from the branches. Chris sprinted toward the man and snatched the rifle from the fallen man. Chris tossed it towards the bushes and shoved his bayonet into the man's chest. His eyes concentrated on something in the distance as the metal pierced him.

Chris remembered this look, it was known as the 'thousand yard' stare. Chris watched the man's look glaze over as he slipped into darkness. He grabbed the grenades and small pieces of intel from the man's body. Chris leaned against a tree and unrated, he hadn't used the restroom in at least two days. He made his way back to his hole and waited for the battle to die out. Enemy soldiers scattered as he fired at them. He no longer got an adrenaline rush it was almost natural like washing the dishes. Chris hated this. He didn't want to be accustomed to all of this death and violence.

The battle carried on for most of the night and died out sometime around four in the morning. Chris picked up his rifles and jogged to the command post. He could smell some kind of stew being made nearby. He pitched his tent and turned the m-60 in to be cleaned. He only needed one rifle anyway.

After following the seductive scent of the broth he found a large man leaned over a pot, he was tapping a small container of oregano as the little flakes landed in the warm kettle. The man looked up and noticed the pale dark haired boy staring at the food. "Come over here." The man said, Chris snapped from his daze and cautiously walked towards the food. "You look like your skinny a** hasn't eaten in days, pull up a seat my man." The large man offered a small stump. Chris sat down slowly while the man poured the broth into a cup.

Chris took it thankfully. " My name is Angel incase you were wondering, " he explained. Chris held out his hand and shook the huge paw at the end of Angel's arm, Chris had notice the burly man before. He always pictured him as a lumber Jack. But damn, he could cook. Chris was already drowning in his second cup when a hard palm slapped him on the back. Chris spat up his soup and coughed as Jimmy cackled behind him. Angel got up and grabbed the clever that was wedged in his cutting board. He stood straight up and Chris then realized how dangerous Angel could really be..Even though he had a flower apron on, Chris knew he was tough. The fire in Jimmy's eyes flickered and died out. He knew not to mess with Angel. He

continued from previous page

trudged away unhappily. Angel sat down slowly and threw the meat clever at a tree, it stuck into the tree with a loud "THWACH!" the other men stopped their tasks and looked over towards Chris.

Angel undid his apron and folded it neatly in his backpack. He pulled a blue metal long slide colt 45. It was a beautiful pistol. He disassembled it and cleaned the sleek grooves. He poured his self a cup of hot soup and slowly drank it. Chris noticed how kind and gentle he was towards the gun.

"My dad gave me this when I was twelve. I have had it ever since." Angel explained. He finished cleaning it and placed it carefully into its leather holster. Chris helped himself to another cup of soup. Angel came lumbering around the corner with some dry red jalepenos. He grabbed a mason jar and scoops it full of hot soup. Angel sat and crushed the jalepenos and placed one of them in the jar of soup.

Chris stirred it with a bamboo spoon and took a small sip. The spice shocked his throat in waves of prickly pain, but it felt good. He collected 2 other jars of the soup. Angel sat and carved a piece of bamboo. He stuck a frozen pea into the hole. He winked at me and turned towards a group of men. Chris could see Jimmy's greasy bearded face slobbering over a chicken thigh. Angel sent the pea rocketing from the stick. It stuck him on his right cheek. He turned quickly and glared at Angel. Angel pulled a butterfly knife and spun it amazingly fast on his fingers. Jimmy's eyes widened in fear, he ran back to his tent. Everybody laughed hysterically. Chris could tell that Angel had some kind background in hand-to-hand combat.

"I have to get back to my hole." Chris explained. Angel put a confused face on and starting getting his stuff together. "You ain't going out there alone, city boy, I'm surprised you made it this far." Angel hoisted his backpack up to his shoulders and shoved a clip into his m14. It had a varmint scope and a long walnut body. Angel picked up the vat of soup and placed it in a circle if injured men. They grunted sounds of appreciation. Chris followed Angel through the tall dark forest.

Chris felt much safer now that he wasn't alone. They ran towards the clearing of trees and jumped into a small creek. Chris looked up to find 2 NVA soldiers running down the hill towards them. Angel shot one and he crumpled over in pain. The other charged towards Chris with only

a knife in his hand, he started swinging violently and screaming. Chris snatched his throat and shoved his head under the small amount of water in the creek. He thrashed violently and kicked while the bubbles escaped from his mouth. The soldier grabbed Chris's genitals and squeezed amazingly hard. Chris shrieked in pain as the man's body slowly went limp. Chris was laying on the bank crying and holding his crotch. Angel ran over and pulled a bag from his pack. He filled it with water and told Chris to hold it so it won't swell.

Angel saw Chris's face relax as the cold water soothed the pain. They sat on the small patch of dry grass and angel dug a large 5 foot wide 3 foot thick trench. He made it just so Chris could lay down to sleep. come quickly! Chris daydreamed of home, the empty flat fields of Kansas and before he knew it he was asleep. He awakened to the sound of a stick grenade that had detonated a few feet from the hole.

Angel was sitting upright against the side of the trench. Chris could see the sweat rolling down Angel's light black skin. It was mid-afternoon and the sun was just resting on the distant mountains. One of the men from another company ran over and jumped beside Chris's foxhole "they don't know we have positions this close try. Not to draw any attention to our platoon." He meant that the Vietnamese had no idea of our position.

Chris was fine with that, he didn't have to worry about any big firefights tonight. The soldier sprinted to the next hole and said the same message. They sat in silence for about an hour until a sharp crack caught their attention. Jimmy had a bottle of beer in one hand and a 45 in the other. He was shooting randomly in the air. The whole company was signaling for him to get down, he wouldn't listen. The man in the trench next to Chris nodded at him. Chris rifle and fixed his sights on Jimmy's neck. He fired 1 shot and waited for his reaction. A small hole the size of a grape opened his jugular. Jimmy gurgled and fell to the floor.

The next morning they would take turns urinating on his body. He deserved it.

-Nate, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Great story telling. According to your story living the life of a soldier must be a hard and a dangerous life to live. To be involved in the business of killing people must be a devil of a thing to do. For example, Angel is a hero on the battlefield, but what would he be like as a friend when you got home?

Tears of Confusion

Drip drop, tears fall down my eyes
But for some reason I can't figure out why I cry
Over time, my teardrops get bigger
I find myself with myself feeling sicker
Angry at the world and its history
Wanting revenge for the agony it did to me
I may be a mad man, hurt and confused
Trying to carry on in life, but I feel overused
Worn out from this pain that I feel
It impacted my heart and I hate that it's real
I still keep my head up and look to the sky
But will never know the reason I cry

-Tommy Gun, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We guess sometimes the pain just builds up until it overflows. Sometimes, all of us find ourselves shedding tears without knowing the reason at that moment. At the same time, we think you have lots of good reasons to cry. Confusion is part of growing up, which you are clearly doing. Keep writing, and maybe your own words will make things clearer. (We had to edit that one line, hope you approve.)

The Worst Drug On The Streets

There are many drugs out there that people today use like weed, crack, cocaine, and Meth. Crack Cocaine is used mostly on the street because a lot of drug dealers sale crack cocaine. Many of our black older people today use crack cocaine and each day black and whites are dying from the drugs. Some of us people cannot stop using drugs because they had been using it for a while and they have a habit that they cannot stop.

Many people need help with their lives and they think the only way out is to use drugs and it's not. Parents when they stress a lot they use drugs and it's not ok. We our self need to try to talk to others that use drugs and explain to them it kills you each and every day you use them.

-Eddie, Alameda

From the Beat: You're right. We have to take it upon ourselves to let people know that drugs aren't the solutions to their problems. It's up to the us and the community to help our own kind. No one else is going to do it. We're glad that you have this mentality

God And Unbelievers

I'm not gonna spit this twice, so you better pay attention.
There are words and phrases that I'm not gonna mention
just to the fact that I'm gonna make this clean
and it's still gonna slap, do yadadimean?
No profanity, the N word, and even vulgarity
all the things I need to do in the community
I'm not Satan, here to kill, steal and destroy
I'm a human being that brings happiness, fun and joy.
So don't try to say that I'm committing libel
because everything I just said is in the Bible.
If you don't know this then you need to read it.
Look over the work and then try to receive it.
Like Jesus Christ said you cannot be luke warm
to get into the heavens inside the Father's dorm.
So stop trying to keep all of your sinful ways
'cause these are in fact the last and final days.
But the Lord's return is gonna be unexpected.

Until that day comes we all gonna be tested
on the words we said, the sins we committed,
the way we confessed and tried to admit it.
Don't forget the love we have for others,
the way we trusted our fathers and mothers.
And for the evil people and all the deceivers,
the atheists and all of the unbelievers,
when it's time to be judged and you're done with your
testing
don't get on your hands and knees and then start the
confessing
saying, "Dear lord, I'm sorry, forgive me, I love you"
'cause all he's gonna say is, "Son, I don't even know you."

-Hyper Chaotic Shadow, New Foundations, Solano
From The Beat: The heart is always open to someone saying, "I'm sorry forgive me I love you..." although we understand you're trying to warn folks against waiting until the last minute to do the right thing. Do you think nonbelievers can be decent, good people? There's a word Martin Luther King Jr. used: agape — being able to love someone even when you don't like what they are doing. Check it out, then tell us what role forgiveness plays.

The White Powdery Thing

My heart hurts, my heart hopes, but I can't stand it
anymore.
Mom's gone, grandma's far along.
What's left for me?
That white powdery thing is bringing my family to an
early destiny.
Man, I hope I'm not next, because it seems like that's
what God plans for me.
That coke makes the world seem so easy,
but it's just making the pain fly by.
Why?
Cocaine seems to be the answer,
but why are so many dying.
It seems like a disaster.
I think cocaine is the worst answer.

-Jackson, Alameda

From The Beat: Twenty years ago, before you were born, there was a full-fledged crack epidemic in Oakland. There is some evidence that law enforcement ignored the trafficking of cocaine for political reasons, and to protect major drug distributors. Several urban communities paid a huge price in the form of increased violence, addiction, and deaths. You have seen in your own family the devastation cocaine can cause. We definitely don't think that God plans for you to become an addict. We hope and pray that you can be there for your family members, care for them, and resist the temptation to escape into the powder. And maybe do some more reading about crack cocaine in your community. Get educated and get angry!

Different Life

I'm so sick of waking up each morning to these four
walls and locked door.
I'm through with people having a say over when I eat, or
what I do.
Thinking back, nothing I did to end up in here is even
worth it,
because I can't even live my life right.
I swear on everything: when I get outta here
I'm gonna change who I kick it with and what I do.
There is so much I could be doing with my life and being
in here is not one of them.
I need to learn to think before I make decisions.
I have to think about the long-term effects though,
not just what I'm feeling at the moment.
I will do better. Life's too short, brah. Too short.

-Baby Girl, Alameda

From The Beat: No judge, PO., counselor, parent, Beat editor, pastor, or best friend could ever say it better than you just did. You know what you have to do.

Screw Ups

By just being in here
You automatically get locked at different
Treated like evil villains
Right off the bat you get this evil name.
"Screw up"

I say no one in here is a screw up.
We all made a bad decision
We all are humans
We all think
We all care
We all want love
We all CAN change. If people would just listen
Just try and help
Just try to pay attention
Eventually they would all see
One huge thing in you and me
We are not screw-ups!!!
None of us deserve to be left behind
Thought less of,
Abandoned
We all just want someone to believe
In us, in you, in me
We all want it.
Cause we know, deep inside
We are not screw ups
We all made a poor choice
But we are not screw ups!!

Together in this situation
Yes we are all different
But in the end there is one thing in common
We all want someone to believe in us
To show compassion
To show love
To give us their game
To get rid of that evil name:
Screw ups

I know none of us are screw ups
We all can change
And it all starts with one person
One to believe in us
To help us all
So we finally realize
We are not screw ups.

-Dylan, Alameda

From The Beat: This is the kind of poem we'd want to see shouted from rooftops, blasted on television, tagged on walls, so maybe the outside world would understand what really goes on in the hearts of the so-called screw ups. If anything was proof that what you say is true, it's the heart and passion of what you just wrote.

Flow Just Like A River

My feelings is steady and they flow just like a river
It don't be cold but when I think about my past I sometimes shiver
It's like I ripped my heart out and put it right on this sheet
Only the strong is meant to survive you won't make it if you weak
I wonder if I wasn't in jail would I b dead
Or is there a future for me that lies ahead
Stress was controlling me, so I talk to God about my situation
He said "child everything gon' be all right, you just gotta be patient"
Somehow through this I know that I'm gonna prevail
With all the faith I got and all the support I have I can't and won't fail
Every day that past me I sit in my room and drown in my thoughts
Just waiting for the day my freedom will be sought
I have my days where I just wanna be left in my room to be alone.
I have so much on my shoulders it's like I'm carrying a stone
I can't understand why my insides feel so cold
They can take my freedom but never will I sell my soul
Even thought I'm in jail they can't hold me down or take my smile
The only way the staff know me is from reading my file
All my feelings can't even fit on this one line
So respect me and respect my mind.

-Young Art, Alameda

From The Beat: The system can try to write your life story in your file/ but they miss the truth of your soul by a mile/you a struggle in life so you will need to fight it/but your story and future are yours if you write it!

A Picture Of You

The last time I cried was when I got a picture of me and my little sister when we were small. I didn't want to cry, but I couldn't hold it in, it hurt too much to see that picture of me and my little sister.

Sometimes I tell myself, why did I do the things I did, I wouldn't have been here right now and I wouldn't have left the one I love and care about so much behind.

-Solo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Looking back, we all have regrets. What specifically do you wish you hadn't done? How can you make your decisions differently in the future to make sure you don't repeat the same mistakes?

Wiser

I'm getting much more wiser than what I was before.
No more hanging in these streets
because they way too cold,
shoot you in a heartbeat "or" mistaken identity.
Hmm... wiser,
it's time to wise up before my life runs up.
Only live once, no more acting hella dumb.
Wiser.

Can you please understand that I'm not a problem child growing up, man, living my life buckwild?
My granny always tells me that I'm smarter than I think, too afraid to show the good girl
because what my friends might think of me.
But I'm a lot more wiser so I don't really care.

-Tiney-bo, Alameda

From The Beat: We've spent time with you in workshops for awhile now, and we see you growing and getting wiser all the time (changing along with your ever-changing and provocative Beat names!) With your smarts, your magnetic personality, your humor, and your desire to stay out of trouble, you're gonna be unstoppable on the outs. It's not going to be easy, but part of wisdom is accepting that life isn't easy.

Cocaine

The worst drug in my opinion is cocaine.

Cocaine was my favorite drug. Two years ago, I was sniffing it and smoking it. I first started using coke when I was 16 years old.

It all started with one single line. Ever since, I've become a fiend. A couple months later, I became more addicted to it. I would steal and sell my stuff for money. Then I would use my funds for coke.

The reason I liked coke was because it gave me so much energy to keep me going. It would make me skate for hours and hours, non-stop.

Eventually, I ended up having panic attacks for doing too much. I didn't eat, didn't go home, or even take showers for days.

One day it hit me. I started shaking and sweat was dripping all over my body then the worst part was I couldn't breath for a while. I was really scared I thought I was gonna die in front of my friends.

The funny thing was they were trippin' and they continue to sniff away while I was trying to calm myself down.

Two hours later, I felt like giving up. Then, I saw a shiny light and passed out for five minutes. I woke up and my friends threw water on my face. I thought it was a dream but it wasn't. I thanked God for letting me live again. But, one week later, I started back up sniffing my life away for the year.

When I got locked up, I realized I had a problem. I decided to change my life around, I don't want to weigh 90 pounds again, hurt myself or hurt my family.

-Hector, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope that you take this time, at a young age, to quit. We've known and witnessed a lot of folks who are serious addicts struggle with their addictions for most of their adulthood, basically imprisoned by the drug.

Coke

You lay me out on the flat surface
Cut, then scrape, put me in lines
Break out the straw or dollar bill
Bring your nose close to the hole
Place it on me
Sniff one sniff two you finished one of me
Now I've got you
You catch your breath
I take you in
You spin and spin
Talk without knowing
Do without caring
Its all fun for you, at least your first time
But I really have you now
You slowly start to step off
Now you want me even more
Its not as fun as it was the first time
I took hold
Now its almost like work
Time after time I'm getting deeper and deeper in you
You're all sucked up with bags under your eyes
But you don't care
You'll steal, you'll cheat
All for me
A taste of my sweet candy
You call my name
My name cocaine
And all I'll want is you to be mine
I don't care who you are
I don't care where you're from
I'll take you down
One by one
So come play with me
And see if you'll ever be free

-Sophia, Santa Clara

From The Beat: No thanks Ms Caine. We've got more interesting folks to hang out with. Powerful poem about a tragic addiction.

I Love New Orleans

What's up, Beat? My name is John'Ta, and I'm from New Orleans. I been through a lot the last couple of years, like fightin' the hurricane and family problems. It's even harder sittin' in YGC in this room. It feel like I'm in a cage 'cause I can't get up and do what I'm used to doing.

I miss New Orleans a lot. I'm planning to move back as soon as possible. I would start talking about Hurricane Katrina, but it make me very upset and sad so I just think about it. It hurt me every time I think about it and when they talk about it on TV.

It all started in the year 2005 when we discovered that a hurricane was about to destroy my city. My family and I was just thinking it was not going to be that bad because they had other hurricanes that year that wasn't that bad, just a little rain and wind. It was dark and we was sitting on our steps, but we hard a strange sound. It was the levy broke. Then people started saying they broke the levy on purpose 'cause before then it was just rain and wind. But still, it felt like it was a heater on the street.

People dying, children crying, upsetting for everyone. I was cryin' and I thought it was the last time I was goin' to see my family. I was scared. We said a prayer. My grandmother said a family that stays together can pray together. After all that, everyone started cryin', and we all say we love each other, No matter what, we here for each other. I love New Orleans.

-John 'Ta, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you had to experience the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, but we are so happy that you and your family came through it. You've written a very fine description of what you felt like, and how love can keep a family together even in difficult times. We know and love New Orleans, too, and hope that you and your family get to go 'home' soon.

First Hand Experience: Meth

In my opinion the worst drug is meth. Here are some of the reasons why I think meth is the worst drug in America. In my experiences, meth is the worst drug because after you do it one time you are addicted. And I live in a home with my dad, grandparents, aunt, her husband and my uncle and since they were kids about 16, all except my grandparents are still to this day addicted to it, and still live with their parents.

I think if they weren't addicted things would be different, because it changes your body, mind every thing. It makes them fiend when don't have it and the comedown is a horrible sight to see. People who do meth and can't get it can't function or think about anything but how to get high. It ruins teeth and your whole appearance. It ruins families' whole entire homes.

It completely engulfs the user to the point that they don't even know who they are. So it makes them easier to lie to yourself, and easier not to care about anything but meth. You can die from the comedown alone. It's also known as speed and the reason why is because it does, just that it speeds up your whole life, your whole body and mind. So for these reasons I think meth is the worst drug in America. And so from seeing what it does to people, I have never ever wanted nor ever been tempted to try it.

And any person who has ever dealt with it first-hand knows how bad it is.

-Michael, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, Michael, we are sorry you had to gain this knowledge from watching the suffering and pain of so many family members. It seems though that you have become wiser because of it. Like you said, you've dealt with it first-hand, and you can share your knowledge, just the way you did in this piece. You could be part of the fight against it. Peace.

Hall of Illusions – For My Dad

Ticket please,
Thanks.

Walk through the doors to the walls
of the illusion
witness yours
to see what could have been real,
except you had to mess up the whole deal.
Let's take a walk down the hallway
it's a long way
it takes all day.

When you get to the end, you'll find a chair with straps and chains.
We'll strap you in there
and lock you down,

so you can't move a thread,
then we'll pull your eyelids over your head
'cause you're about to witness
an illusionary dream:

It's just too bad,
it ain't what it seems.

You walk in and see your kid on the floor
playing Nintendo and getting the high score.

You look, see mom chilling in a chair,
Oh, but you ain't there!

There's some other man and they're hand in hand,
so happy

but you don't understand.

See, this is all 'cause of you and what you put yourself through
back to reality and what you're about.

Your wife can't smile, 'cause you knocked her teeth out,
can't see straight 'cause you a fat drunk piece of shhh
but it's all good.

Grab a beer

I'll rip the top off and shove it in your ear

'cause your death comes painful and slow ...

- Anthony, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is an interesting little piece that seems to have an allusion to Anthony Burgess's "Clockwork Orange" – have you read this book or seen this movie? You should. Creative outlets are a great way to deal with our feelings about people in our families.

*The addiction is so strong,
most people can't stop using.*

How Addiction Stole Love

I think that the worst drug is Crystal Meth. I think this 'cause it ruins the most families, takes the most jobs, and most of all kills the most people. The addiction is so strong, most people can't stop using. There's so many people that have their entire life ruined, yet they're still using. The drug has spread through all of the United States.

Most of my family has been lost to this drug, so it makes me smart enough to not try it. But I fear it's too late for some of my family. So all I can say is don't use! It will only take everything you love. I try to tell my family about what it is doing to everybody who loves them, but I guess it's too strong.

-Jonathan, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: Meth is a very powerful drug. You might want your family to read a book called "Beautiful Boy" (by David Sheff) that tells the story of a meth-addicted boy from the father's point of view. It is a very powerful and very sad book. Maybe it will open someone's eyes. All you can do is make yourself a roll model by not using. At least those coming up after you, your younger siblings and cousins, will look up to you and follow your example.

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried
I really didn't have a reason.
I cried because I panicked,
Everybody was watching.

I cried 'cause I was happy
going back on faded memories.
I cried 'cause I was mad,
I let people get to me.

I cried in my head silently,
Askin' why you hurt me.
I cried in my dreams,
Begging for someone to wake me.

My pencil writes my tears
For my hidden fears.
For deep inside I cannot cry
For this pain I will cry.

-Queen POOH, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We think the pencil is working very well for you. If you keep writing (especially writing as good as this), maybe you'll discover more beyond the fears, and the tears. What would that be?

The Worst Drug Ever

Thizz to me is the worst drug ever. It took my life. I was stealin' from my family. I was disrespecting my dad, treating him like nothing. I OD'd over it. I was trippin'. Family was nothing. The drug was everything.

But now I realized it ain't worth it to me. I would rather have a life than pop pills all my life. That's why I need a life. It's time to have the life for my family.

-Jesse, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: If you read what everyone else has written, you'll see that any drug, from alcohol to ecstasy, can be "the worst drug." All of them soon take control, leaving you a slave to the drug. We hope you keep the promise you make here to "have a life," because you can lose everything so quickly. You may need help kicking your habit, but asking for help is a sign of maturity and strength. Don't forget!

Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried was when my cousin died.
The last time I cried I seen death in my eyes.
The last time I cried it affected my life.
The last time I cried I knew it was all lies.
The last time I cried I didn't care about life.
The last time I cried it hurt me inside.
Last time I cried he was next to my side.
Last time I cried was because he's in my mind.
He's there when I'm down and I know he's down to ride.

-Young L, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We hear how deeply you felt the death of your cousin, and are sorry for your loss. We are sure he's there when you're down—but wonder if from the great perspective of death, if he'd still be "down to ride." What would he say to you about your time, and your future—if he could? Remember, the longer you live, the longer he remains alive with you.

Time To Think

Just sittin' here thinking of the outcome how ma life is passin' me by, where did I go wrong, why am I here, starin' at my reflection in the mirror from a jail cell—cryin' in the inside not showin' the pain.

I hear voices in my head sayin':

"Is this what you want? Locked down for eternity? This isn't what you wanna be — you have people, family, places to see and things to be! Now stop — take another look, see yourself get older. Time's running out, catch yourself before it's late."

-Kr, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: It sounds like your life hit the pause button so you could question your choices, and make some decisions about your future. Write down the pain if you can't show it—it can help. Your own goodness — your conscience — is talking to you. Listen to yourself!

The Last Time I Shed A Tear

The last time I shed a tear was on May 24, 2008, the day before my court. I was gonna get released, but then my PO called my unit and told me that my mom got deported to Mexico. I thought it was the last day to breathe, like it was the end of the world for me.

I froze with the phone in my ear. Next thing I know, I dropped the staff phone and went straight to my room and started to cry. I cried myself to sleep. I didn't know what to do. I just got under my blanket and cried, and when I woke up, I shed one last tear and told myself that I would not cry or shed no more tears.

-Christopher, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We can only imagine the pain piled on pain to learn that your mom got deported while you were incarcerated! Tears seem completely appropriate in this case. You now have an extra responsibility to get yourself free and to stay that way so you and your mom can be reunited. We hope that happens soon.

Meth Doesn't Only Affect Your Heart

Meth is the worst drug a person can take. I've seen it ruin my uncle's life. Every time he's on it, he goes crazy. One time he hurt his own mother. Meth has got him nowhere but a heart attack, and now he's got a pacer in his heart because he had a heart of a hundred-year-old man. It has affected his mom and his daughters that never get to see him... and their hearts, and mine as well, be just as hurt as his.

-Ernest, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: It's really awful to watch someone you love battle with addiction. Your story shows how our individual choices affect the people we love as well. Your uncle's sad story of meth addiction could be any drug addiction, from heroin to alcohol. When people say they're only hurting themselves, what you've written proves them wrong!

Life

My grandmother is the family jewel.
I've been with her from diapers to when I helped her make her first homemade pool.
Me and my family have seen and learned a lot, but I can't begin to tell everything I got.
But one day the whole family got together to party and have laughter,
but something strange happened soon right after.
As my grandma left, we all happened to realize that if she never was, no one in the room would ever be alive.

-Ernest, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We can see how lucky you were to have a brilliant gem like your grandmother holding things together... and how lucky she was to have a loving grandson like you. If she could sit with you now, what would she want you to do with your life, Ernest? You're still connected to her, so what would she say... and what will you do?

The Worst Drug

The worst drug that I have probably experienced would be acid. I've had an uncle who was going to UCLA. He was at a frat party and someone just didn't like him. They were jealous of what he had, so they spiked his drink with bad acid and fried his brain. The doctors said they couldn't do anything for him, that the rest of his life someone had to take care of him. He lives with my grandma and walks up and down Main Street in a raincoat every day. This all happened before I was born. I wish I could have met my uncle.

-Kyle, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: Because of foolish jealousy, your uncle wasn't able to become the man he could be. Please don't let your own opportunities for life slip away, or become decided by someone else who doesn't have your best interest in mind! From A (acid) to Z (Zoloff), any drug can be "the worst" if it takes over your life. We are sorry about your uncle, and proud of you for feeling his pain even though you never knew him.

Heroin Killed Him

I gonna talk about my friend Arturo, RIP. When we used to be more younger, we used to kick it in the varrio. We just to do a lot of things. But something disappointed us when I found out he was addicted to la chiva (heroin). When I saw him, my blood went to the floor 'cause he was shabby, and now he was so skinny. He was falling apart.

I feel very bad 'cause he was my favorite friend. I helped him a lot to change his life, and he was doing good. But one day I was working, and I got a text message that he was in the hospital. When I was on my way, they called me that he passed away. I felt I was gonna pass out, so I got there, but I was late. Now I miss him.

RIP vato. Con mucho love.

-D, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is so sad that, even with all your help, your friend was not able to resist the pull of drugs, and they took him out! As with any drug (including alcohol), once you're under its influence, you do things you might not have done if you were sober. This is a terrible tragedy, and we hope it keeps you from ever playing around with these deadly chemicals!

My Brother And I

Back in the days I used to always fight with my big brother always getting on his nerve talking shhh to him 'cause I was just a little kid and didn't know better.

Ever since I mature and came to the hall I began to realize how much my big brother meant to me, he's always there for me driving me places and buying me food and taking me out even though I was a little brat.

He doesn't know this yet but ever since my dad past away like four years ago I started to look up to him and want to be like him, 'cause after my dad past he was always there to help me out, my sister, and my mom driving us places, help me go to school and stay out of trouble and take time out of his life to sit down and talk to me!

I'm glad that he my older brother even though he drink, does drugs, and dropped out of school, he is trying his best to go back to school even though he hates school! And get a job to help out the family.

I want to be exactly like him when I grow up even though he tell me he don't want me to be like him and to be better than him, I still want to. He's my brother and I love him so much with all my heart, real talk!

-Cuong, Sana Clara

From The Beat: We sense your brother means the world to you. No one will ever be able to replace him and what he means to you. It's always enlightening to see little brothers looking up to big brothers who are working on living a better life. If you don't know anything else you know he got your back. Now make him proud and get out of jail!

Thuggin': The Worst Drug

What's good with The Beat! Mayne, once again doin' my thang, ya dig...

But yeah, the worst drug ever is thuggin'. You know why? It's 'cause you get addicted to everything you do, like; sellin' dope; to makin' money; to hittin' licks; to Bustin' thangs; to smokin' blunts; to drinkin' and poppin'; to meetin' them broads ; to stealin' cars.

Then everything lead to power. Then power leads to life in jail or death... That's only if you play yo' cards right!

To all the homies, keep yo' head up!

-Ulala, San Francisco

From The Beat: You left one item off your list of "everything you do" — and that item is coming to the hall! That seems like a part that should go in your list since it almost always goes with all the other things on your list. As for power leading to disaster, there's an old saying that "all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." We agree.

Inside My Head

I'm doing time inside my mind;
 I sit up in a silent cell and think about this life of hell.
 These demons haunt me all the time,
 so I just write another rhyme and try to explain it all.
 These vents that got me stuck in a state of a coma.
 Silent violence, razor blade in jugular vein, in my neck.
 I'm doing the work of the devil.

Call me a rebel
 living with this jacked up life,
 that's why I grab a knife and take my life.
 Can anybody help this burning evil inside my chest?
 I did my best.

I killed the rest.
 I made a bloody mess, bloody rain drops,
 heart is pacing, memories are racing.
 I think about when the razor hit's the skin,
 blood pouring on the floor, and I want some more.

I got to let you know this rap's fo' sure and there ain't
 no place to go

plus there ain't no ho I'm about to blow.
 Take seven Tylenol followed down with the Nyquil.

Momma I'm sorry it had to come to this,
 but I'm tired of living my life in darkness.
 You should have listened when you had the chance,
 now I'm going for my last dance.

Take a glance at me when I'm lying in my casket,
 I dream about dying every day and I'm not gonna play
 when it's time to go away. They say that they loved me,
 but I never did believe them.

-Mark, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We know and hope that what you write is just that, words of expression. Seek the help of a professional to get rid of the demons that haunt you, don't let these demons consume you. Many don't care to take medication, but sometimes that's the only way to get rid of what you have. Get the help you deserve and let us know how you're doing.

It's Okay To Cry

What's good with The Beat? The last time I cried was when I got shoot. I didn't cry because of the bullets. I cried 'cause I woke up with a war wound down my stomach.

Man, I'ma let you ninjas know straight up, it's ok to cry. Straight up thugs cry too, so keep it 100%, you feel me? Straight up man, 'cause I'm 'bout whateva, and I myself struggle with my inner feelings.

-Mb, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with every word. We're sorry about that zipper down your stomach, but happy that you're still here among the living. Besides crying, did it make you think about life any differently? We'd love for you to write a piece that explains some of those inner feelings you're struggling with.

The Worst Drug

The worst drug I think is heroin. We have watched videos about drugs, and they say heroin has a bad affect on you. Once you have used it for so long, it is hard to get off of it. Most people use heroin. Heroin is the top drug in the United States.

People try to stop using it, but it's hard. Some people can't do it 'cause their body is already used it to it. Some people use needles and shoot it up, and some people blend it up and snort it like powder.

-Lil' Maijji, Alameda

From The Beat: Not only is the drug dangerous, but the ways of consuming it are dangerous too. You put yourself in risk of AIDS and other infectious diseases carried through blood by using potentially dirty needles. Way to be informed! It's important to keep reminding yourself of the dangers of hard drugs, because the real "worst drug" is the one that gets you.

Me and My Brother

My brother and I isn't doing well right now. We are not as close as I'd like to be. You see, I was very abusive towards him. But I regret it so much. Everyday I would hit him, kick him, hurt him. I wish I never had.

I cry and cry because of this. I want to make it up to him. I want him to love me, to help me, to understand me. But he doesn't want to help me, hear me, or have anything to do with me. It hurts me so, knowing this. I love him dearly, and wish to protect him. I want him to love me. I want to help him succeed.

My mistakes haunt me. I believe that they will haunt me until I make things right. I want him to know that I care for him. I miss him so. Don't make my mistakes. Please!

-Kitsune, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We believe your little brother will one day see the light and he'll forgive you for doing those things he knew you did because you were young and didn't know any better. Things will get better, just hang in there and let time present that moment to you.

Burning Like Hot Coals

My heart is aching, my brain is takin'
 By so many people fakin'
 Now my hands is forever shakin'
 'Cause my brain is haunted
 And has never been flaunted

Empty holes, open souls
 Never protected from vicious blows
 They burn like hot, hot coals
 And it's never meant to show
 Damn, why it got to be so cold?
 Make me crumble to the ground and frown
 It's uneven, whatever happened

-D-Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is a lot of pain expressed in this tight poem, D-Boy, so we hope you are turning a corner in your life... passing out of childhood and into adulthood. The biggest difference is that as a child, you are at the mercy of forces you cannot control which can beat you down. But as an adult, you can guide your own path, and turn away from the past and toward a lighter, brighter future. We hope you do!

Sad And Happy Tears

The last time I cried was my last visit with my mom and my aunt. It really hurts to see them hurting because of my actions.

It shouldn't be like this. I should be home with the ones that love me and show them that I can live a "normal" teenage life and not always be in the hall. Me being in here really makes me think of my family and how much I am missing out in life. I don't want my life to always be like this, so in order to change my life around I am going to put my family before anything because I hate to see them hurting, especially my mom. I don't like seeing her stressed, and always sad. I would like to see her everyday not only on visits and hearing from her only through letters. That's not the way its supposed to be.

Although there are sad tears, there are also happy tears. Like when I found out my girl was pregnant I cried but they were tears of joy because I was so happy and couldn't hold it in.

-Angel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is obvious that you care incredibly for your family, and you are very sincere when you say that you want to help relieve some of their pain and stress. That is the most important thing! As long as you have your motivation in the right place, which it sounds like you do, we believe that nothing can stop you from making the changes you know you need to make. There is always time to turn things around.

Love is my Drug

Ever since I got attacked, to love my life hasn't been the same. It slowed my sophomore year. I was a family person and a human being that was all about school and being successful. I mean, I had a couple girlfriends before and did what I did. But the one I'm going to talk about just blew me up.

I met this girl, we were talking for a cool minute, and then we got together. It was cool, talking on the phone all the time, seeing each other and just being ourselves. A month into the relationship we started doing our thing, making love and all that. I guess you can say ever since then all we really did was "make love" (sex). All I'm gonna say to all out there, sex gets addicting. Believe it or not, it is. But the girl was beautiful and was always there for me. But my parents didn't like her because they supposedly knew about her and that she was fake.

I got really mad at that. I basically put my girlfriend over my family. I really regret that. There was one time when my parents and I got in an argument about my girlfriend, so I got so mad that I pushed my mom and she fell to the floor. That is probably the most hurtful thing I did my whole life. I've been jumped before, BADLY, but what I did to my mom destroys me. The woman is still there, but I love you mom. Later on, our relationship got stronger. But my friends also told me about my girlfriend, so I practically had no family, no friends. It was just me and her against the world. Me and my girlfriend would get into a lot of fights because all the rumors I heard about her started getting to me.

Then probably about 9 months into the relationship I found out she has been cheating on me for 6 months. That got me so mad that when I saw her I yelled at her and broke her phone (the phone ended up being a gift from the dude she was cheating on me with). So I got locked up for a month. Over a girl. Wow, how foolish of me.

I cried so much, I can't believe I chose that girl over my parents and friends. I will never forgive myself for the choices I made. I'm deeply sorry for turning myself on you, mom and dad. I love you two to death. I'm sorry.

And to all my friends, I'm also sorry, I hope you all can forgive me.

Back to the story: once I got out, she tried to apologize and explain. It worked. I took her back, secretly, but she cheated on me again. I couldn't do anything about it because I was on house arrest. So I decided to let go, it was really hard but I had to. I know it sounds dumb after all she did to me, but it was.

From this day, I'm scared of getting hurt again so I hardly fall for anyone. Now I just chill and wait for that girl. "What do you do when you find a pearl in the sea?" You keep her, I read to find that KEEPER. But as for now, I'm just trying to be there for the family and be about my paper. Yea, I talk to females but not take them serious, but don't get it twisted, if the right girl is there I won't let her go.

But that's it for this week Beat, remember always choose your family and be about your papa. Take care Beat. Hopefully I get out soon. I'm going to be a better person. That's a promise. Later Beat.

-Mouthpiece B, Santa Clara

From The Beat: One of the hardest things about growing up is getting your heart broken. We're so sorry for all the pain your former girlfriend submitted you to, and the bad situation it put you in with your family and friends. It is a terrible feeling to find out that someone you put your complete faith in doesn't actually deserve it, but we're glad that you are at a point in your life where you can look back on this and learn. "Love" may conquer all, but family comes first, and when somebody causes that much distress in your life, sometimes you just have to walk away. But now, how will you know when you meet that girl? What do you expect her to be like? How will she be different?

Hypocrites

Q-vo, Beat? Pues, today I'm 'bout to drop some lines about some shhh that's been drifting through my mind lately, and that's people I refer to as hypocrites. It seems that these type of people are getting more and more common as time goes on.

Serio pedo, its s trip how some foo's just be roamin' through the calles with a mask talking 'bout they gangbang and so on. Yet if the script flips and some real foo's hit 'em up, they get spooked and start snitchin' and writing police statements and what not, knowing damn right they're gonna go right back to the calles posted with that mask, acting like they never did shhh like that.

Chale, foo's like that got my laughter eternal. Pues, that's all I gotta say. I'm out. Alrato

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Be careful about who you're laughing at because these "hypocrites" have the power to snitch you out and have the last laugh. The entire criminal justice system rests on a foundation of snitches, from the pettiest crime right up to capital murder. You can condemn it, laugh at it, threaten revenge over it, but you will never change it... which is another good reason to think about changing yourself!

The Last Time I Cried

My uncle used drugs a lot. He got shot four times: two times in the leg, one in the chest, n and he went home and got his arm healed up by pressing the gauze on his gun wound.

He did a lot of drugs such as crack cocaine, marijuana, and he was a big time drinker. His favorite was Taaka. He had about ten a day. He died from an overdose on crack cocaine.

Let me break it down for you. He had went to the hospital. They said he was going to die. So he left the house of my grandma who now died of old age. He said he loved her. He walked out the door. I followed him and he passed out unconscious. I called the paramedics, and they all came. I contacted everyone in my family telling them that he was gone. My thing is for you people and kids out there stay drug free. Don't use any drugs for you.

-Lil' Tyrenl, Alameda

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your uncle. But you do give some good advice followed by an example. We think it's great that you have the courage to talk about what happened to your uncle and use him as an example on why not to use drugs. If you can reach out to anyone at all, your mission will be accomplished.

The Worst Drug Is The Hood

What I think the worst drug is the hood. The reason why I said the hood is because I can't get away from it. I'm not saying that I want to get away from it, I'm just saying I thought about it, and I can't get away. Now In my life I have a lot more responsibilities now and the block is getting me caught up. There isn't no one to blame but myself because I can't get away. Now I'm away from my family, loved ones and my girl. I fully regret what I have done but because of the block and my own ways.

It's got me sitting in jail. I can say I'm stressing because I miss my family and I got a baby on the way. I'm also stressing because I might not get to see my child's birth. I already know the saying "I got no one to blame but myself." All I can say now is the word revenge, but that's what the devil wants. I'm not going to do anything stupid. I'm gonna just do the time and I won't ever get in this predicament again.

Notice that I say "ever" I say this because I don't want to jinx myself with the world never. All I can say now is that I'm sorry and hope for the best, huh, and hope for the best, and make smarter choices and live my life. I'm going to take care of my girl, kid myself, get jobs and think better choices.

-Et, Alameda

From The Beat: The honesty and clarity in this piece is inspiring. You say you can't get away, but on the other hand, it sounds like you have a lot of love in your life and strength in your heart. We think you CAN make smarter choices, and stay away from the block, and from revenge. But you'll need support. Whom do you turn to for support?

Alcohol Is The Worst

The worst drug I alcohol. They make you blind from reality. You can't see what you're missing. You can't control your obligations in life. It's important because you need to be able to control your life or else someone else is going to control it for you. And I am not for sure not going to let no one control me.

-Nutty D, San Francisco

From The Beat: We also think that alcohol is a very dangerous drug, mostly because it's so easy to get and peer pressure is huge to use. So many actions that lead young people to lock-up start with getting drunk, so we have no doubt about how bad it is. Plus, it takes you down little by little, so that by the time you realize you have a problem, it's much, much harder to deal with.

Alcohol

Alcohol is the worst drug or depressant because it's leading in death and it's legal. I used to like to go and party and drink on a beer, but my use started to escalate. I started drinking every day, and my anger raised every day I drank.

Drinking ruins families and kills friendships. Drinking is the worst drug around. How I am going to cope with drinking is keeping busy and staying away from other drinkers and parties.

-Puppychow, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: We have now read that alcohol, acid, cocaine and meth are "the worst" drugs. And we agree with all of you! We, too, have seen how alcohol can ruin lives, little-by-little. Even worse, most young people think drinking is an innocent pastime, without realizing just what they're doing to their minds and bodies. What are you going to keep busy doing so that you won't fall victim to this pattern? The opposite if destructive behavior is creative behavior. What can you create?

When I Cry

When I cry it's for the people I lost in the struggle
 Who lived the street life and couldn't survive the trouble
 When I cry it's for my family
 Who always told me what I shouldn't and can't be
 When I cry it's all for all of my pain
 That won't come out 'cause it's stuck like a stain
 When I cry it's for the people I love
 Who was always there for me, who I put no one above.
 When I cry I look to the sky and I ask God why
 Live every day like my last 'cause I don't know when I'm gon' die.
 When I cry.

-Lil' Purp, Alameda

From The Beat: This is one of your best poems yet, full of pain but also of heart - because the truth is that you deserve better than the life you've had so far. But you will have to leave the street behind you in order to ease this pain and save your own life. Can you do that?

I Finally Got The Message

Yeah, my name is Deontae. I've been here three times. The first time I thought I learned my lesson, but I didn't. The second time I thought I got it. Now I'm back in here, and now I really, really get the message.

Now I'm here, I can't do nothing now 'cause I'm locked up in here and I can't make bad choices now. But now I really get the message. I really do. I need to stop doing all this bad stuff in my life 'cause when I get older, it's going to be worse. So I think I need to sit down for a minute 'cause I really need to stop all this. I'm going to get hurt, or anything could happen to me. So I just really need to slow myself down.

I just hope I really stop and get on the right track, seriously, before I really screw myself up and it be too late and that's it. So I pray every day and night hoping I get another chance to be free and enjoy my life while I can, and stay alive.

-Deontae, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate your determination to get your life back on track. But when you write that you "just hope" that you stop, we know that's not enough. Yes, you need hope and you need prayer, but neither is enough by itself to keep you from coming back. That requires some real courage from you to be able to stand up to homies and say "No" when you know that's the right thing to say. So tell us, why is this time different from the other two times? What's your plan for when you get out? What are you going to stop doing? What are you going to start doing?

I Am

I am a writer of my pain.
I am a person living of shame.
I am your daughter hiding my depression.
I am your sister making a good impression.
I am your friend acting like I'm fine.
I am a wisher wishing this life weren't mine.
I am a girl who thinks of suicide. I am a teenager pushing her tears aside.
I am a student who doesn't have a clue.
I am the girl sitting next to you.
I am the one asking you to care.
I am your best friend hoping you'll be there.

-Q, Alameda

From The Beat: What a powerful poem! You write it up in a way that makes us feel like we all secretly aren't alone, we are secretly a part of the whole human family. Keep writing!

Loyalty, Trust, Respect

Tick tick tick - watching the clock as every second passes. Cling cling cling is all I hear. The keys jingle, doors shut, then lock. I can't stand being in here. I miss you mom - more as every second passes. You're always on my mind.

Instead of writing about my man or about what side of San Jose I'm from - blah blah blah. It's just nonsense. The only thing that matters is you. You brought me into this world, educated me, raised me, taught me.

Family always comes first. "Loyalty, trust, respect" is the way we live. You're my everything - through laughter and tears, even the heartache we face. Throughout the years you stayed strong, never losing faith, always had confidence, giving me hope, loving me unconditionally. Striving for nothing but the best, you believed in me when I felt like giving up. You're my angel sent from heaven, my hero, the most amazing, intelligent, extraordinary, wonderful, beautiful, caring, and most loving person ever! I love you and I'm truly truly thankful I have you as my mother and my best friend.

I'm truly blessed. I thank God I have you. I love you mommy, forever and ever. You're so special. Thank you for never giving up. "Forever your baby girl" - I miss you.

-Loyalty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Cut this one out of The Beat, and give it to your mom. She might frame it. In the meantime, start working on the reasons why you find yourself locked, and separated from your family.

Heroin, The Most Addictive

The drug to me is the most dangerous is heroin. Heroin is the most addicting. I had an aunt who started smoking weed as a teen and realized she wasn't getting high anymore. She smoked for many years, and now in 2008, with enough prayer she is back home doing all she can do to keep our family together.

Heroin changes people, leaving them not to know how blessed they are to live.

I smoked weed before coming to juvenile hall, and I didn't realize how much I thought I needed weed until three days after being here. I now feel relaxed and over weed, and plan to stay off of drugs because I am a lot happier.

-Brittany, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're so glad that you've been able to appreciate how much better you feel now that you have had some time to get clean and sober, even from marijuana. We hope you build on this foundation when you get out, because you will accomplish so much more in your life when you're clear-headed and bright-eyed.

Too Soft

You can make your time, or let your time make you
You can keep it lit when your out, or let the system break you
You can let the system take you or you can try to scrape through
The homies say your not down, now your just a fake dude
You got caught up and the system shook you
You really about to listen to the same cops that booked you?
You were the real you before this cell
Before you got thrown into this living hell
You can change and say, "Ok, for me crime is over"
You're BART riding when I pass you in the Range Rover
You can go do work in a janitor suit with slacks
While my pockets want a diet 'cause they filled with racks
You're living a changed life off chicken noodle soup
I'll be somewhere doin' 102 in some type of coup
Make the cops' changes and live off your noodles
I'm lookin' at you and your crew like a bunch of poodles
So you can do all that, and when I get out
I'm going to apologize to my knocks for the long drought
But for all the homies doing time looking for some tips
When you get out hit me up so I can put you on some zips

-Oz, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What's your plan for doing well?/ No plans for school, for work? Oh well.../ One thing you should, by now, have learned/ A simple lesson that we have many times confirmed/ That selling those zips or pills or rocks/ Can only lead you back into the box!

The Family Jewel

The family jewel for me was my great-grandma. She was one of the most amazing women I have ever met. She was born and raised in Turkey and only spoke Turkish. The thing that was even crazier was that she never worked at a job a day in her life because she dedicated her life not only raising my grandma, but my mom, aunt and also me and my two cousins.

She was the mother of really six kids, not just one. She will always be my guardian angel. I could never picture life without her when she was around, and then in 2002 she passed away at the age of, we believe, 97 - of pneumonia. I have to say to this day, she will always be the mom in my heart

-Luv, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this woman sounds truly amazing. It seems like a lot of us have grandmothers who really take care of the whole family. You are lucky that you got to spend so much quality time with this ancestor.

I'm Sorry Mama

I'm sorry mama for the way I abused you
I didn't think of you, I just thought I would use you
I'm sorry how I didn't tell you that I loved you
Even when you needed it the most, I left for drug use.
I'm sorry how I didn't tell you how my day was
When I was popping pills, drinking and getting wasted.
But most of all, I'm sorry that I'm not the best son I can be
But inside...

-Boots, New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: Have you told her yet? We hope you let her read this heart-felt apology. Now is the time to make the changes you know you must make to be the son she wants you to be... and to be the man you want to be.

Three Simple Words

Before you get in here
 You take them for granted
 They're thrown around all the time
 But sometimes misused.

Especially now behind the door
 You want them more and more
 To finally hear them from their friend,
 To walk to them and know it's the end

All you want is those three little words
 They mean so much
 These three simple words make your day
 Even fiends use to it any way

Those three simple words
 Are always at the back of your mind.
 How great you feel,
 When you finally hear

Those three simple words
 "I love you"

-Sweet Pea-Dylan, Alameda

From The Beat: It's amazing the things we take for granted, isn't it? Rhyming or not rhyming, you always put heart and soul into your poetry. Keep living up to that name!

I Seen My Sister Murdered

When my eyes start to mist I cry.
 I seen my sister die.
 All of us in the car having a good time,
 Then came the bullets.
 Our car was slaughtered and so was my sister.
 I really wish them bullets never hit her.
 All they did was run and hide. I miss my sister.
 Rest in Peace
 Samoan and Tongan, she was a beast.
 I cherish her name forever and ever.
 She was the one in the family that was better.
 Ofa Lahi Atu, some Tongan words for her.
 Samoan and Tongan pride please bless her.
 The last time I cried when my sister died.
 That was the day death was in my eyes.

-Sean. New Foundations, Solano

From The Beat: Sean, forgive the edits—we don't want to glorify anything but your sister! What would she say to you now, while you are locked up, if she could? Would she want you to live in a way that risks your life, , having lost her own? The longer you live, the longer she will live in your heart and mind.

Crack And Meth

To me the worst drug would have to be crack and meth because people get addicted to it and they end up losing everything that they have, like for example the most important thing in life, your family.

I really haven't seen somebody kill themselves by using drugs, but I have seen an alcoholic-like for instance my father used to be an alcoholic and he would come from work all drunk. He never was mad or nothing he actually loved us instead. It hurt to see my dad spend all his money on alcohol and sometimes he would get into arguments with my mom and was really on one.

Luckily my dad changed all that. He started going to programs for alcoholics and I must admit since he stopped drinking he looks a lot younger and he has been more happy than ever.

-Esdras, Challenge, Solano

From The Beat: It's awful to watch someone powerless over drugs or alcohol. We're so glad you got to see your father get sober. Hopefully because of his own experience he'll understand that you could make changes also...Do you want to?

Cocaine: The Worst Drug

The worst drug to me would have to be cocaine. I've seen so many people I know that abused the drug and either ended up dead, hurt, or in prison. I don't think that cocaine is a drug to play with because it alters your mind. One of my friends killed five people from being off cocaine just because he let the drug go to his head. So he's spending the rest of his life behind bars because of powder.

Me personally, I would never do cocaine because I have seen some of the damage it has caused to people that are close to me. If you have friends or family that is on cocaine or any other heavy drug, let them know that they're either headed for death or prison. So for all the people in the world that are using cocaine, please just stop before you end your life or someone else's.

-Quany, New Foundations, Solano

From the Beat: Wow Quany, this is a heavy example. Glad you decided it's not for you. As we've said elsewhere, the "worst" drug is whichever one a person gets addicted to. Tragically, there are other stories of mindless death and destruction with virtually every drug there is, including alcohol. So, keep your mind clear because we need your voice in this effort.

Crack Dealer

I think that the worst drug in America is crack cocaine, just picture it like this- you on the block selling hella product, and some crack head says I'm going to need me a 40 pop so we slap hands, put the money in my pocket and spit out the lock, easy enough.

Two hours later he comes back I need a 40 again, we do it over so I spit it out, next he comes back with a fork and says give me your shhh! boom he gets cracked and I bounce.

Next day some lady comes over and say " I need some."

I say, "what you need, 20?"

We do the thing and I spit it out and 2 day later get rolled up on and swallow the rocks, so I go home, next thing I know- boom! I get hit and get up crack that crack head again and bounce, his face was all deteriorating and he had fat black bloches on his face so that's my story damn... this was in the hood this is the life of a soldier.

-J-Dub, Alameda

From The Beat: Crack cocaine is a disaster and anyone that indulges in its activity is indulges in the producing of death. We hope that crack cocaine will some day die to once again wake up a sleeping America.

The Worst Drug

What's up Beat? It's ya boy Lee. The worst drug to me would have to be pills, because they make people do stupid things. Like some people pop pills to become hard. But then some people pop pills to have a good time. But either reason you pop pills for, they still have bad effects. They put holes in your brain and make you slower than what you already are.

But I'm not putting anybody's happiness or their addiction down. It's just they're not good. But I'm not going to say that I never did it or that when I get out that I'm gone stop, because I'm still gone do me 'cause I'm not coming home till 2009. But I'ma do it every so often.

But to everybody, do ya thang and stay solid.

-Lee Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're curious to know why you would commit to further drug use, after acknowledging that whatever your reasons for taking drugs, they really aren't good for you and can put holes in your brain. Besides the damage that they can do, they also leave some people permanently addicted, adding one more obstacle in their lives that they have to overcome. Be careful that doesn't happen to you.

Where Would I Be – Part 1

(Hook)

Where would we be if moms didn't face the struggle.
Not one day out nine months did she give up on the hustle.
I was born Jungle but she raised me to be a King.
She told me never give up on life son face ya dream.
She raised five kids it couldn't get no worse.
She put her heart into her kids and believe in God first.
If mom didn't teach me right I'd probably be in a hearse
buried somewhere in the Bay six feet under the dirt.

-G-Fight

From The Beat: We can't say it better than she did, "Never give up on life son, face ya dream." Please show her this testament of your love and her strength.

Where Would I Be – Part 2

Where would I be without grandma rescue?
Wouldn't know how to deal with people saying yo moms left you.
Probably even worse than what I could ever imagine,
be so out of it I probably take my life without asking.
I couldn't imagine not having granny in my life
cause at least she gave me some sense and taught me what's
wrong from right.
Where I'd be alone and lost--
I'm thankful for her sacrifice, for paying the cost.

-G-Fight

From The Beat: You and your anonymous friend are here together, grateful for the life these women gave you. Tend carefully all they've given you. Can you share this piece with her, let her see your gratitude in black and white?

The Worst Drug

I think the worst drug is either alcohol or heroin.
Alcohol makes it hard to function and it tears families apart.
Heroin makes you stupid and can't move or make your body function at all.
With these drugs it is nearly impossible to take care of a family or even yourself.

-Manbearpig

From The Beat: We all forget sometimes how connected we are, and that those we are connected to need us to be capable of functioning as well as possible.

Weed

I think the worst drug is weed. It's usually the first drug you use and it opens doors to anything. Very simply, it takes you on your first trip to where you don't want to be. Then you start playin with your nose and blowin' drop clouds which gets you trippin' off cracks and holes in your walls.

-Cannon

From The Beat: Do you regret that first step? We couldn't print your rap due to the glorification of the game...What's your first step going to be when you get out? Think on where it will lead before you take it.

This Life

What's up Beat this yo boy DA from Vallejo.

The worst drug to me is when you do the magic four. You gotta smoke some grapes, snort powder, pop a yellow mitsubishi, and drink. I don't think there is any worse drug besides that.

-DA

From The Beat: We had to edit this piece DA, as we don't print anything that glorifies the game. There's a lot of things to be between a "beast" and a "coward," you can't paint it like that's the only choice. How strong would you have to be to try something else with your life? You list friends locked up or dead, you've been locked up for a while--

Vacaville

Well I'm here reporting you about the streets I live in, where there is a disaster. There is a large gang, there's been stabbings, and all in the city where I'm from is out of control.

It hurts to lose a homeboy so to every homie that's passed away Rest In Peace. You might think that Vacaville is a city with no criminal act, it's wrong there are bad places to be, not just there everywhere you go.

-Chopolin

From The Beat: We had to edit this a lot. We printed the piece because we want you to see that you call it a disaster, but can't wait to get back to it. "Disasters" can be all consuming—if you didn't do that what would you do with your life?

Day 119

It's day 119 that makes it my 119th struggle. Well, I have 49 days to go. Last night on my 118th struggle, I was thinking I wasn't gone make it much longer. I was really on one. But I'm cool today. I lost points today, but oh well, life isn't over.

I get a 36-hour furlough on Saturday. That's when we get to go home and spend time with the family. Well, I just wanted to say free my friend. He locked up too. He has it way worse, so keep your head up. I'm gone see you next time.

-Twun-Twun

From The Beat: By the time you read this, your "struggle" will be much closer to ending! Are you making some specific, positive plans for what you'll do outside? If you don't make a plan, you can be sure that someone else will be making one for you! (We had to edit a bit because the Beat can't be used to communicate directly with others locked down.)

The Worst Drug Is Every Drug

I think the worst drug is every drug.
Every drug has someone who's addicted.
Every drug has someone who is ready to kill the next person to have it.
Every drug has someone who sells it to make money.
Every drug can make you rich and then get it all took by the feds.

-Dorin

From The Beat: Why do you think so many people use drugs? What are you going to do when confronted with drugs?

Jail

Jail really isn't nothing. It's borin' period they try to bring us in here to keep us off the streets but the more they keep us the more we want to get back to the hood. The streets raised us since we were little and some of us love the hood.

-Young Dal

From The Beat: Sorry about the edits but specific names and info can't be printed. Life is more complicated than saying you either love the hood or you don't. We weigh good things and bad things and make decisions. You listed friends locked up or dead. That's a lot of pain and drama. Just to check it, what else do you love?

Dope Fiends

In my opinion, the worst drug out on the streets is meth. The people that I know on meth say that once they smoke once that they never wanted to quit. I see people that have been smoking dope for a long time and they are always scratching like there are bugs crawling around on their skin. But there's nothing there. Some of the tweakers have holes in their teeth because they have been smoking too much. I have close friends and family that smoke the pilo and they think that they are superman.

Now me, I like to pop pills. I know pills are bad and they put holes in your brain. Well ya that's all for now.

-Scotty

From The Beat: Can you do what you want with your life with holes in your brain? What are other ways you've discovered to get "that feeling?" They say meditation does something with your brain that satisfies, so people don't want as much drugs.

Souljah On The Streets

Every time I try to leave the streets
something keeps calling me back.
Could it be the crime or dope fiends
that got me ready to stack?
I wonder if I come back for the love of money
or am I just loyal to the game?
I live wild, ain't a thang funny.
The drama got me going insane.
My lifestyle is full of danger
I try to find a way to change.
This alcohol motivates my anger
that gets me acting pretty strange.
The weed got me crazy
so I'm hopeless with nothing to lose.
Don't let anything phase me.
You wouldn't last a mile in my shoes.
On these streets I'm a storm
with my own thunder,
always cold and never warm.
And I always wonder
why I run the streets till the sun rises
with a frown on my face.
My heart's cold as ice
while being trapped in a maze.

-Tommy-G

From The Beat: Sounds like you're looking for a way out even though you may not see the exit yet. If we had one piece of strong advice to give you, it would be to deal with the alcohol that "motivates your anger." Nothing can make a heart colder than relying on alcohol for warmth... Maybe if you could live a different life for a while — especially one not polluted by chemicals — your heart could thaw out, and you could find out what you might love... and what might love you.

Worst Drugs

I think worst drug is when you snort coke, drink heem,
smoke weed. It might be the worst drug, but I be so on I
can't feel my face. Drugs release stress but when it's all
gone I need some more. It might be the worst drugs but
it's the best drug. Without drugs it aint nothin else that's
have you out of yo body

- Millie

From The Beat: We wonder if that's a good thing not to be able to feel your face? Drugs may release some stress, and cause a lot more. Many people have learned to meditate and they say that it does some of what drugs do to your mind, without all the harmful drama.

My Only Angel

I know you feel the same as I do
and I know that you want me, too.
So let's get all the bull aside,
open your mind and let me inside.
Taking a journey through your mind,
you telling me things that blow my mind.
I gotta say you're just my kind,
so boy would you like to be mine?
Eres mi unico angelito
I gotta say that I wanna keep you.
Looking into each others eyes,
it gets me all hypnotized.
So now I'ma make it short,
but I hope that you like this little poem I wrote.
But I'll be back again...
This is for you, my little friend...

-Lady Happy

From The Beat: Love can be so uplifting, especially in the beginning. But hey, not much can come of love in jail though. We understand why you're thinking of that special angel when you're locked up, but what we're most interest in is what you want to make of your life, Lady.

Drugs

The worst drug is all drugs.
People nowadays snort a whole Mountain of Everest.
Some girls don't even put make-up on,
because they already got enough powder on they nose
ya mean.
Baboons be out here on one going late night lurkin'.
The girls be out here on one and getting ready to be put
on the strip.
I be out hanging on a daily basis.
All night and all day.

- Bay King

From The Beat: It's like it can make you sell your soul for a minute but you lose a lifetime. From where you're sitting now, do you think you're doing what you really want to do in your life? If you had huge faith in yourself, what would you try?

Love

You know how much I love you
Me and you forever true
I'll always be on your side
Through all the things you do
You wanna give me everything
I wanna give you more
My heart is like a house
And for you I open the door.
You are the light that starts my day
As long as you love me back, with you I'll always stay
With me and you together, the love was there from the start
I'm so attached to you that I'll die if we're apart
My love is oh so strong , if I'm the Queen
You sit on my throne
I love you and you love me back
They wanna do me grimy 'cause my behavior is out of whack
But forget all them, now it's me and you... I'm glad you got my back.

-Smiley

From The Beat: You say, "It's me and you" and that he's got your back. But here you are, away from him, writing sad love poems. So, to truly make it "you and him," you have to make some changes so that you can be with him (free). Whatever you did that got you here was more important than your love at the time you did it. Now you have to get your priorities straight, and start living that way!

Locked Up

What is it, to be locked up and caged like an animal?
To balance out yo soul, to where you and your life is understandable.
Don't look at being locked up as a way to take on self-pity,
and persevere
as a way to strengthen your mind and conquer your fears.
Even though jail is negative and not the place to be
sometimes it takes a situation like this to set your body free.
It slows you down and gets you in tune with self
helps you explore avenues to your own self help.
A wise man once told me that a man is
one who thinks about how his actions will affect others,
those like sisters, brothers & mothers-
hell even your next door neighbor.
If your next move is your best move it can be a life saver.

-G-Fight

From The Beat: You are so right on in this piece G-Fight, sir—will you keep it in your pocket always? What are ways on the outs you can "slow down and get in tune with your self?" Do you keep a journal?

Lost Soul

I was born a lost soul
misguided toward my goal.
The path I chose to take
led me toward a real fake place
that people would kill to see
not knowing it leads to misery.
But this choice made me who I am
turned my whole life into a program
that's fully controlled by sin.
And although I could've been
a better person in society
I wouldn't ever even try to be someone else
even if I had the opportunity.
I'd remain the same in my community.
Even if I achieve my goal
I will die as a lost soul.

-Tommy-G

From The Beat: If you know your goal is misguided, leading you to a fake place full of misery, why do you want to stick to that? Are you loving being "a lost soul?" If you weren't lost, who would you be? What could you be? We understand why people fall back to doing the things they know, but when the things you know lead to lock-up (a form of slavery), why keep doing them?

The Legal Card

I know it's illegal, but with a card it's legal.
It never got me in trouble so I don't know why it's bad.
Most of the time it helps when I'm all out and mad.
Just talking about it makes me glad,
thinking about the times when it's all I had
to ease my mind, and not do crime.
I aint lyin' sometimes I was flyin'.
But don't do it, because you'll get stuck to it--
That's it eventually I'll quit...

-Lil' Nite

From The Beat: We think it's not so much a moral issue, it's good or it's bad. We've seen the trouble it causes people, big trouble talked about in these pages.

Meth The Demon

I seen close relatives being hooked on meth, cocaine,
and even huffing paint. Meth is a demon it hooks on you
and makes you front (lie) a lot. Cocaine would give you a
mentality that you are superman and nothing could phase
you. Huffing paint I probably seen used the most with
family it probably takes a toll a lot quicker than other
drugs. I seen many drugs being used these are drugs I
seen people I looked up to do the most.

-Remi

From The Beat: How is it to watch people you look up to do this to themselves? Does it affect your own decisions about drug use yourself? How do you deal with your feelings?

Drug Money

The worst drug? I'ma tell you of one you needed since
you were a baby... Money. I think money is the root of
all evil, and it is also addicting. Even homeless people
need it. Money is the key to everything, and some will
do everything to get it. I'm addicted to money, I have to
have it and no matter how much of it I have, I always want
more.

-Not Signed

From The Beat: Some would say the whole country shares this addiction. Does your money hunt interfere with your family or other relationships? If money is "the key to everything," we are so many rich people just as unhappy as everyone else? (And by the way, the Bible says it is the LOVE of money that is the root of all evil, not the money itself...)

My Opinion

Drugs...what can I say? I mean, I use drugs, but I don't
find my drankin and dankin a bad habit. I've seen some
real shhh though.

I seen homies using meth and goin bad shhh like dat.
As I was growing up I started noticing like my homie, the
one who brought me in the game, I started noticing my
ninja was getting paid! He was sellin crystal meth. Little
did I know he was using it and I guess he was getting
messed up. Leave that poison-it's not us.

-Los

From The Beat: Do the people you know who you think DO have a bad habit with drinking or drugs, do you think they think they do?

The Street Game

Since the beginning of time
I been a victim on these streets
At a young age addicted to crime
Learned how to stand on my own two feet.
Over time learned the rules to the game
To which I stayed loyal and true.
You can catch me in the fast lane
With a blunt and a brew
Pour out some liquor for my homies
That didn't make it this far.
I still remember what my dead OG told me
Hold my head and wish upon a star
Know that every step I take you take
Every breath I breathe you breathe
Every dollar I make you make
When your soul is cold mine will freeze
I been down since the beginning of time
Stressed with my bloodshot eyes.
Remain true until the end of time
Just another lost soul ready to die

-Tommy-G

From The Beat: No one knows what they will be doing "until the end of time." What you think you know today can easily change tomorrow. So, we urge you to keep an open mind to the possibility of change, and with change, a better future. You're in this program for a reason. There is so much more of the world you haven't experienced yet. Don't give up!

RIP Mom

I miss my mom so much.
Sometimes I look at the sky to see if she's there,
but I never see her. Only knew her 15 short years.
Then one day she just disappeared.
I didn't even get a chance to say good-bye.
When I think of her, all I want to do is cry.
It's crazy how life works... One day she's here an it's all
fine,
The next day she's gone and I'm asking God why?
I was locked down in these halls when she left earth,
Then I heard about her death and all I felt was hurt.
But I keep my memories of her strong, nobody can take
them away.
And I have this feeling that I will meet up with her in
heaven someday.
But I'ma hurry and get straight to the punch...
I already told you this but — I miss my mom so much.
Thank you for everything mom, I love you so much!

-Lil' C

From The Beat: We believe you are connected with people still, even after they die. What would she want for you now? We think she'd want you to find out who you might be in life, where you might go, who you might meet. Keep her in your heart and let that give you strength to face life's challenges.

Patnas

Patnas ain't always what you think they is. They coo' to a certain extent, but don't give 'em yo' heart and mind because as soon as they got that, they basically could control you. If you really want to get to really know someone, let it be a female, but not just anyone 'cause sometimes that's not even coo'.

Just because you seen another person face before don't make 'em your friend. It takes me a while to really just get used to someone and put some trust into 'em because people is shady. They would smile in yo' face, and as soon as it's time to get down, they freeze up or even snitch. Like Plies said, in every click there is a potential snitch. So if you got patnas, role wit' 'em to a certain extent and do it movin'.

-Dat-S

From The Beat: You shouldn't stop trusting people just because you've had a few negative experiences. Yes, it is important to be careful while choosing who to confide in, but there are people out there you can trust. The truth is, however, that the only way to be sure to protect yourself from snitches is not to do anything that can give a person the ammunition they need to snitch...

Never Snitch

The topic we discussed today was, what would you do if you used to use your friend's car and he told you it was ok but the car was hot, and you got pulled over and the cop found all those drugs and guns, I would have just accepted whatever the judge was go give me, I wouldn't have told on anyone, I would've said it was mine. If you told who stuff it was, it would have been a possibility that he could have had me killed. I would have had to do my 15 or 20 years for my ninja no matter what,

Snitchin' ain't never been a rule in the game.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: It's important to take responsibility for your actions, but you don't have to take the blame for other people's actions. We're sure your friend would appreciate that you didn't snitch on him, but how long would it be before you started to resent him for letting you take the fall? We're curious about that "game" rule of never snitching. If you knew that a child was being molested, would you say nothing?

RIP Grandmom

The last time I shed some was a week ago. I cried because my grandmother died. She been a mother to me for 12 years of my life. I never had a real mom but my grandmom, and I still cry because I couldn't go see her for the last time in my life. She died three months ago.

I never let nobody see me cry because a man never let anybody see you cry but your family.

-Jp

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. You're lucky to have had such a beautiful relationship with your grandmother. Sometimes it's good to let things out. You shouldn't be afraid to show tears and emotion. Real men do cry. Continue writing, especially during this rough time.

The Worst Drug

The worst drug I think is E.pills. Them pills will have you tryin' to fight a 500-pound man. You grind your teeth. It feels like you can run so long without even stopping. They say it is mixed with every drug you can think of. Also that liquid stuff that's in your spine, when you pop a pill, an E-pill, you lose it every time.

-Anonymous

From the Beat: We're glad that you're so informed about the dangers of ecstasy. It can and usually is mixed with a lot of other destructive drugs, and you wouldn't even know they were in the pill. A lot of the people who take it don't know about the risks of E, which makes your knowledge even more valuable. Be sure to share it.

As Close As A Brother

The people I mess with is like family. The person that is really close to me is Lil' Charlie.

You might have heard from him in The beat. He is like a brother to me. I'm so close with him, whatever he did, I was always on the side, ready. We are like super glue. We will never be apart. All you ninjas that said ya homies snitch, it ain't like that with none of us.

-Lil' Hyfee

From The Beat: Having someone you can trust is a very valuable thing. Don't hesitate to let the people you care about know that you appreciate them.

No Fool For Repping

What's cracking Beat this that homeboy G Shadow coming from the streets of San Francisco.

Well today's topic is a fool or a father. Mi papa was never a fool even though he's in the pen for repping. You know my grandpa is not a fool even though he rep it too. Me, I rep and I'm no fool either so you got to remember you can bang but you can still be a good father to your kids feel me! But my words getting short, shout out to all locked.

-Shadow

From The Beat: You say you are not a fool, and that you can be a good father even as a gang banger. But how do you think a person can be a good father when they are locked up? Sure, you can love your kids while you reppin, but the consequences are probably going to keep you away from your kids a whole lot, maybe even kill you. We don't know what it was like for your father and grandfather, but we can guess they weren't around so much. When you locked up you're not going to be there to put food on the table, read to your kids, tuck them in at night, wrestle with them. They not gonna have a dad who is there for them, who shows them how to be a good man and father. Are you willing to miss out on seeing your kids grow up and/or dying for this sad life?

The Family Jewels

The two oldest people in my family are my grandmother and my great grand mother. My two grandmothers are both very strong women. They have been on this earth for a very long time and have been though a lot. I love them both with all my heart because they're the ones who made it possible for me to be alive today.

I don't really speak with my great grandmother unless I see her. But my grandmother on my dad side is whom I talk with and has learned a lot from. I know she's gone always be here for me no matter what. Even though she was mad at me because she said I'm going down the same path as my uncles and she doesn't want me to end up like them in prison or like my pops (RIP)

-Chippa

From The Beat: You got to respect it. There's nothing wrong with her trying to stop an outcome she knows will come if you continue to walk down similar paths of family members who've had paid with their lives.

Diablo Walks With Me

Cuetes popping, many hiding rolling through the varrio straight up riding got a bloody filero in my hand mamacita I can love you like no one can Diablo walks with me my varrio influences me I'll rep my side till I became decease

-Shadow

From The Beat: Diablo walks with you but do Diablo have your best in mind? Is Diablo going to be there the next time you get into trouble to get you out? Do Diablo feed you and put food in your stomach or do Diablo only assist you in times of violence looking to lead you to self-destruction?

100% Fake

Man, cats these day be high power fakin'. Man ninjas nowadays claim they're real but when its time to be a real ninja and keep it solid, ninjas snitch. Man, I don't know 'bout cats these days. All I can say ninjas is a 100 percent fake. That all I'ma say

-Anonymous

From The Beat: To be honest, we really don't care that much about what you think of those locked up with you. Focusing your attention on them won't help you at all. The entire criminal justice system is based on a foundation of snitches, from petty crimes to capital crimes. So get used to it. There's only one way to protect yourself from snitches, and that's not to do what they can snitch you off for doing. Otherwise, you'll always be surrounded by snitches.

Waiting

What's up with The Beat? this yo' boy Lil' Kev. I'm still waiting to get sentenced because I went to court on July 10 and we went over the time, so I go back to court later for my sentencing. I'm still lightweight spooked about getting sentenced because I'm not trying to hear where they're going to send me or how much time I'm gone get.

I was mad when I went to court because the DA was making me mad. He kept saying I should go to CYA because he said if I get put in a placement and get home passes that I'm going to be menace to society.

The DA is wrong because when I get out I'm not going back to the hood or kick it with the people I used to. I'm a different person and I think smarter now, I'm going to get out and talk with them a little and explain to them how bad violence is. But anyways, I'm doing good in here and trying to cut.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: We are excited to see that you are seeing that change comes first by changing your thoughts and then changing tired actions. You will live a long time if you stay thinking with the intelligent mind frame we are hearing. We suggest that you think about what you will do if your crew doesn't listen to your advice about violence. That could be a hard moment, if it comes, so you might want to prepare yourself. It might be hard to tear yourself away from your homies at that moment, but it will be so important if you want to continue building on everything you've started.

Forget Ninjas

How I feel about it is these ninjas out to snitch, they don't see anything good for themselves, so they hate on the next and try to get them tucked or make them lose. These ninjas is the ninjas that ain't got shhh, and they want you to feel the same. Like me, I make sure my ninjas eat. Me and my ninjas I really mess with, we eat. Forget the rest of these ninjas.

-No Name

From The Beat: You say that they are haters and out to insult other people, but what are you doing? You are concentrating solely on other people's flaws, when you can use this time to reflect on yourself. As long as you keep pointing your finger at others, you'll keep finding yourself in places like this — and we're pretty sure that while you're here, you're not feeding anyone!

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried was like in '04 when my great granny died. She was like a momma I never had and she was family. And why I cried, I know she was gone pass away because the last time I seen her she couldn't move or talk or even eat. This the last time I cried so it was like four years ago since it's '08.

-Swipe

From The Beat: When you write about it now, does it make you feel some of those same emotions? We're sorry she's gone, but we're happy you had someone in your life who loved you enough for you to shed tears for.

Risk

The outs and the love is what I miss. To keep it 100% I have taken so many risk. I have put my life on the line so many times to the point where my habit became lying. I destroyed my own life, flash backs when my head fills with shock.

-Jamarco

From The Beat: You may have taken a lot of risks in this life of yours but we think you probably haven't destroyed it at this point. It sounds like you have seen some horrible things and maybe done some too, and this can make anyone have experiences that make you feel really strange. Sometimes you might even feel like you are reliving everything all over again or can't believe certain things are happening/have happened. If this is what it's like for you, we really hope you talk with a counselor you trust. You are still so young and have a lot of life ahead of you. There is so much you can learn from your mistakes and a lot of wonderful new things you can develop for yourself.

Heroin

I think the worst drug is heroin, because a lot of people get addicted to it real fast. Even the first time they use it they can get addicted, and they can loose everything over it.

Most heroin addicts usually will do anything for the high, that's why it's so bad. They will sell valuables so they can go purchase the drug. It's also the worst because you can die easily and your body can deteriorate from using it.

Also, say you're an addict and another one comes along and wants it more than you then they either rob or kill you over that drug. It can put you on the streets too, so it's the worst drug in my eyes.

-Lil' Drew

From The Beat: There's no doubt about it, heroin use often leads to a lot of the problems you write about. The chemicals in the drug are some of the most addictive out there. We appreciate your warnings to others who may not have had so much contact with heroin users.

The Family Jewel

The oldest person in my family is my grandmother. She means a lot to me and a lot to everyone in my family. I learned from my grandmother to love and live everyday and don't take life for granted. And she is always laughing and in a good mood and that is what keeps us feeling the joy also.

-Cameron

From The Beat: It is so much of a blessing when we hear stories about strong families and young men speaking about their love for their families. When you got someone who is so full of love and positive feelings, it can really help to instill this in your family's future generations.

Risk

My life is at risk everyday
On the block hustling knocks
And pulling glocks praying
To god I don't get
Popped, riding through
The wrong hood
Same place my cousin stood
Got killed, wish I could
Take it back I really
Wish I could RIP
My cousin G-Dubb

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: We feel for your cousin but we feel for you more if you decide to follow his footsteps. We all make mistakes in this life but some mistakes will cost you your life so you must take control and make some better choices about the things that you do.

It's In Your Head

I don't think any drug is the worst because different peoples' bodies handle stuff differently. Some people will try a drug one time and become addicted while others can do the same drug occasionally but not result to crime to support them habits.

-Squints

From The Beat: That's true, some people can do an addictive drug and not have it take over their lives. The problem is, there's no way to know before you try it which person you'll be. Taking an addictive substance is a big risk, and if you lose you could lose everything - money, loved ones, even your life. Definitely not a worthwhile risk.

I Cried Hearing My Baby Mama's Needs

When I got to use the phone and mybaby mama answered the phone crying and shhh. I'm like what's wrong and she telling me how much she need me at the house to go through the pregnancy with her, and how she ain't got nobody to go to the doctor with her.

Then she start saying how I ain't gone be there when my son born, and that just really made me think like, damn, I really ain't gone be there. That just hit a soft spot in my heart and shhh, a ninja shed a couple of tears. But shhh happen fo' a reason, but I'm gonna make it right when I get out.

-Nasty boy Rick

From The Beat: Not being able to be there for your future baby's mother is hard on everyone involved. We hope you look inside yourself, remember that you do want to be there, and how hard it is not too. You clearly want to be there for your newly created family, so use what you're feeling now as motivation to stay out and be there for both of them as soon as you can.

Dad Left Me Hanging

My dad left me hanging. I think he threw his responsibilities out the window. I will always love my dad, but respect is definitely lost. I never really saw my dad for the last six years.

He was on the news for sleeping with a prostitute. I felt ashamed that he was on the news. My mom was really embarrassed. I didn't even claim him after that. He was never the type for me to look up to. He really didn't care that I looked at him as a friend instead of a father. He used to hit on my mom.

-Mississippi

From The Beat: Sounds like your dad was a real disappointment. Everyone doesn't turn out like we wish they would, and especially for a little kid it's hard to take at times. Maybe you can turn this into a learning experience, though, even if it's about what not to do as a father.

My Daughter

When I finally get out it won't be the same. Going home it won't be just about me no more, it's gone have to be about me and my daughter but my child comes first.

Me being locked up while my first child is born is kind of messes with my mind because I won't see my baby girl until three months after she's born. I won't be able to touch, kiss, hold, etc... do nothing with my child until I finally go home but won't see her until she's three months old.

-Daddy's Waiting

From The Beat: That sounds rough to be away from her in these early months. But it's a great thing to let your love for a child help change your life around so you do things differently. You have made your mistakes, you are paying for those mistakes, and now you still have the opportunity to see your daughter for the first time while she's still young and you'll be the first one to teach her how to walk, crawl, etc. Now make sure you keep thinking about your family when the streets call, so you can keep your actions clean and stay on the outs.

When I Get Out

When I get out I want to change my ways. When I get out I intend to stay focused because I don't want to end up back in jail. I intend to stay out of trouble and stay away from the wrong crowd. The reason I say stay away from the wrong crowd is because I picked bad things up and I got myself put up in jail.

When I get out I intend to just stay away from the bad crowd and be around some people that's going to be helpful in my life. When I get out I'm going to finish school, also I'm going to get a job.

I'm going to stay out the streets because the streets ain't it to be in. People getting killed everyday over stupid things. Man I don't want to die to these streets. Never that I will lay down in my grave for posting on another block.

Man, two to five people been killed on my street since I been in here. Like I said the street life--that's out. Don't want to see my mamma crying 'cause I got shot in these streets. Never.

-James

From The Beat: Sometimes we need to change our environment and the company we keep in order to stay out of trouble and situations that stop us from advancing in our lives. Sometimes it's best to stay in line, wait your turn and do the right thing. Now you gotta make sure your wise thoughts keep helping you make good decisions. We are with you 100%. We want to see you alive and doing positive things in your family and community, not having to die til you're old and ready to go.

My Great Grandmother

My great grandmother is the oldest in our family. She's 85 and she means the world to me. She a strong black woman and she taught us a lot of things such as the value of life and being responsible as a man. She always told me to be a man and not a disrespectful man. She told me always treat people the way I wanted to be treated. She was the most respected role model in our family.

-Lil' Nef

From The Beat: One can't help but to respect the kind of individuals you are talking about. What do you think she would suggest for you as you move forward in your life? Is there anything she could have said or done that would have helped you avoid your current situation (being locked up)?

Risk Factor

The biggest risk I've taken is robbing a man in broad daylight and ended up getting in a shootout in broad daylight. I could've risked going to jail forever if I would've got caught.

-Factor

From The Beat: Yes, you could have. Being in jail for the rest of your life can be worse than death in some ways. When you on the outs, make sure you remember how much you missed freedom. If you get a second chance, you better make sure you get it right this time!

Not Anymore

I used weed before; I didn't feel it!

The worst drug is Meth; it can kill you faster

Most of the time I try to tell my friends that we should stop.

I want to be alcohol-free because I want to prove to people that I'm not going to be like my dad or my mom. They drink all the time and now they can stop, and that really hurt me when I was little. Not anymore.

-Edwin

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you grew up around alcoholics. The only "silver lining" is that you will learn from their mistakes and not repeat them. If you want to be alcohol-free, then that's exactly what you should be, from today forward. Why not?

All For My Child

I take risk all the time some good times, some bad. It's all for my child I rather take the chance instead of my baby having to go through the same stuff I went through. Some of my choices caused a downfall in my life.

If my parents would have did more, then I wouldn't have made some of my decisions. I really can't complain, they did what they can.

-DaShawn

From The Beat: We hope that the risks you are taking aren't going to keep you locked up the rest of your life. That's not good for you or your child. We know you want to do more for your kid than your parents did- you can step up and do a whole lot for your child without doing things that will get you mixed up with the law or killed.

One More Month

What's up Beat? Damn I'm hella happy, I only got one more month to go and then I'm out.

I remember when I first got here I was like damn I got three and half months to do, and now I'm down to my last month. I'm just glad that I'm 'bout to be released. For this last month that I'm still here, every time I be in my room, I'm gonna think about what I'm gonna do when I get out. I'm going to find a good way of getting money instead of the bad way so I won't end up back in here.

-Lil' Hs

From The Beat: We're glad you're getting close to your release too, and even more glad that you're going to spend some time thinking about plans for when that happens. Getting a job will do so much for you, if you can stick to it, to help you stay out of the hall. Just stick to that plan, you'll be ok.

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried is when my uncle died. That was a few months ago. I cried because I was locked up and couldn't go to the funeral and that hurt me kind of bad. Me and my uncle was real close.

Another time I cried is when my grandma died in 2000. That made me just stop caring for people and do a lot of things that I shouldn't do.

That's all I gotta say 'till next week. To all keep yo' head up and knock yo' time out peace.

-Damani

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your experiences Damani. Losing family members, especially those you feel close to, is an extremely difficult thing to go through. It can make you feel negatively about the world, maybe make you care less for others and even yourself, like you said. We hope in the years since your more difficult times you've made some peace and found people and things to care about.

A Father Not Foolish

A lot of "fathers" out there are not living up to their names. They are walking out on their children and that to me is some coward shhh. Everybody needs a father figure in their lives.

Boys need their daddies in their lives to teach them to be men. Girls need daddies in their lives to keep them in control. Families need daddies for support. When it's my time to be a daddy, I'm gone be there 100% for my seed. Whatever they need, I will provide for them, emotional, mental and financial support for my family. Family first!

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: You are so right! There are a lot of cowards in this world that's running away from responsibility like they can run forever. The kids suffer, but the dads do too, cause they don't get the satisfaction and love of their family. We like your attitude and we hope you follow-through. Now, when you set out to provide for your future-kids, are you gonna keep gang banging, or do you have plans to go legit and put food on the table without risking your life? We like dads who are alive and living at home, not dead or in jail!

Baby

Her skin is so soft
Her mind is so blue
Our spirits is so lost
but our love is so true
I wake up without you
can this nightmare be so true
I have good dreams and bad dreams of times.

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: We hope that you one day get back to the woman whose mind is so blue. We aren't trying to get on you but true love and jail don't do the do.

The Game

I got the 24's on the black Chevy...

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: Sorry we can't publish your piece, man, but as you probably already know it isn't the message we are interested in sending out. It's about time we killed this game because the game is putting blood on too many brothers name.

Weed

The worst drug for me is weed. I say that because I used to smoke so much of it that I really didn't get high no more, so that's when I started poppin' pills.

Grownups used to tell me that weed is a gateway drug and that it leads to other drugs. I didn't believe them until I experienced it for ma self and started poppin pills everyday. But me, my opinion is that all drugs is bad for you no matter how much you take or how you look at it. If you use a drug on a daily basis is you is addicted to that drug straight up.

-Nasty Boy Rick

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your negative experiences with drug use and addiction. A lot of people, like you said, are in denial of their addictions. They think it's just one dose so it's no big deal, or it's ok because it's just swallowing a pill. In fact, this type of thinking is often the start of an addiction. You make some good points and we hope others listen, including you!

All By Myself

I'm in the zone all by myself.
I'm all alone all by myself
but I don't need nobody else but me myself an' God.
I had a cousin that would of busted still for me.
I had a cousin that would of ride, that will kill for me.
But I argue an' fight with my own mother
an' nowadays you can't really trust yo' own brother.
But now I gotta watch who be the closest to me
'cause my cousin could be the one who put the toaster to me.
That's why I gotta watch my surroundings.
It's like they just left me around the ones that can swim,
love watchin me drown,
help me up if you watch me fall down.
I'm by myself, you can't watch me fall down.
I can't forget all the love I lost all by myself.
They say this why I'm still in a cell all by myself.
I'm in the zone all by myself,
I'm all alone all by myself, but I don't need nobody else
but me myself an' God.
Rest in peace Gussy-Bo

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: Sometimes it can really feel like you can't rely on anyone but yourself. People can let you down, people can betray you. The trick is to learn from those people you trusted, use that knowledge to better figure out who in your life deserves your trust. Not everyone is a back stabber, it just takes some effort and thought to figure out who you can rely on. The good ones are out there, you just have to find them.

Gotta Get Back

Hooked to the real world like a knock on crack
I don't know bout you, but shhh I got to get back
and get my hands back round the world
make a impact on both sides of the game
got to get back, to get back and get high out my brain.

-Beans

From The Beat: Yeah, being in jail is insane and you want out. Out here can be hectic but you'll also find a peace in your brain. If you get another chance, you gone throw it away if you get foolish and do stuff that's gonna put you in the hands of the law and lock you up again.

Hood Home

I need to go home, they trying to keep me in for hella long but it all good! I'm from the hood I'm gone always be good.

-the good hood

From The Beat: There's nothing good about being locked up unless you are taking advantage of it and are going to come home a productive citizen to your community. Whatever happens always keep your head high but don't think that it's good if the result still involve being locked up.

RIP Irma Dove

The last time I cried was August 10, 2006 it's when my great grandma died.

I was so hurt that I could not make it to the funeral. It killed me to hear that she had passed. I had just talked to her on the phone. And it touched my heart to hear her speak and for her to still know who I was.

She was 84 years old, and she would have a full on conversation with me. She would ask me how I'm doin' in school and the whole thang. But now she's gone. Rest in Peace Irma Dove August 10, 2006

-Grandson

From The Beat: Wow, she must have been so full of life and love. We're sorry you lost her, but glad that you had the chance to know her. What was the best advice she ever gave you?

The Pain Of A "Good" Visit

The last time I cried was when I was in visiting having a good visit. Well, not good 'cause I'm in here, but good 'cause I was getting to see my daughter, my aunt, and my cousin. He was in here before me...but it is sad for us to be in here together.

It was time for visiting to end and they called my unit and I had to see my aunty walking away with my daughter. Just thinking about it makes me wanna cry. To top that my aunt had just told me one of my brothers is in the pen for 5 years behind some bull and I'm going through a lot of stress. This needs to end so I can get to my family.

-Louis

From The Beat: You do a great job holding your head up with all this stress. How do you do it? Do you think on the love you have, do you make plans for your future? Does having a little girl help you motivate to change your life?

Where I See Myself in Ten Years

I'm going to have an alright life hopefully. Hopefully I still be alive. I don't plan on dying but shhh happens sometimes. I want to live to have a family and be able to support them.

-Cree

From The Beat: You have control over your future. Sure, anything could happen, but there's a lot you can do to push the odds in your favor, depending on how you live, who you hang out with, where you go. Are you doing your best to push the odds in your favor?

Getting Closer To The Lord Jesus Christ

I will be writing today about my new relationship with God.

I am proud to say I am a son of God which back in the days I wasn't.

When I was growing up I witnessed a lot of people glorifying the Lord and His great deed He's done for people.

Not that I didn't believe in Him, it was just my mind was focused on other things

like the streets which I thought was all I really had while I was growing up with my low classed family.

Even though my family didn't have a lot they still praised God

and back then I was like, for what?

When He hasn't done anything for us or simply me, but as I grew up and got wiser I started to realize

how much I really needed God in my life.

So that's when I started going to church,

but I keep getting knocked off track and focusing back on the streets

which kept leading me to a useless life.

What I mean by that is being locked up and just doing too much!

So while I've been praying and asking God for help to change my life.

A fellow of God squad helped with a few words of advice, He helped me start reading the bible which lead me to a clearer understanding

of how to change and live a better saved life in Christ.

So now I have been being rewarded for my good deeds and turn my life to God.

Other people would say I'm a sucker

but I would rather be a sucker with the Lord than to be a factor in the streets without Him. Alright Beat I'm out, just know a better life is a life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Nellybo

From The Beat: We're glad you've found beliefs that you can rely on, ones that help you turn your life around. Religion can be a powerful thing, change lives even. Again, we're glad you've found something you can believe in that will help you change your life around for the better.

Confused Youngsta

For everyone that reads this, it's Li'l Indio from Livermore.

Just want to say that I been locked down up in here for robbery and got court soon. I am either going to Camp Sweeney for six months or get off on EM.

Hope I get out on EM, see all my family and all of my homies. To be with them like how we been with each other from day one, out on the streets just doing my thing just like how everyone is in the hood. Can't wait until I get out back to the hood and do what I do. You feel me that's just how I do.

Mary Jane is my main thing!

Being locked up is a waste of time, there ain't no ladies up in here. There's everything to do on the outside. You miss your family, homies, girls. But you feel me that's how it just goes sometimes when you get caught up. I did this robbery last year and they brought it up this year until my record got big. Just do what you got to do and be you homie because I'm always me solid!

-Li'l Indio

From The Beat: You say that sitting around locked up is a waste of time, but we want to know, what is so much more productive about sitting on the streets doing drugs? Is the only difference the people and air around you? Is there more you want to do with the freedom you have on the outs?

Seeing My Mom in ICU

Last time I cried was when I almost lost the women I love the most... my mother. I was hurt when I seen my mom in ICU at Highland Hospital. And if you don't know what ICU means it's intensive care unit.

I didn't know what it meant neither until that time but I told her that I loved her and that I'm sorry for how I am and she cried too. So she got through it, and was strong, and then she came home. But I haven't cried since nothing was more painful than losing my love.

-Sunny-D

From The Beat: We're so happy she made it back home. Did that experience change your relationship for the better? And did you change the way you lived afterwards? Did it bring you closer?

The Last Time I Cried Was When I Popped A Pill

The time I cried was the first time I popped a pill and I was thinking of my dead sister Tanika Wade and my dead cousins Anthony Custard and Eric Savoy. I was just trippin because I was missin' them so much damn only if I could see them 1 more time. I would give my last breath to hear they voice one more time I love you

-Clay-Dizzle

From The Beat: You have lost so many people already, it's like you've been in a war. But do you believe that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger? Because we do - and we believe that you have an important story to share with the world. You need to be the first one to break away: The pioneer.

The Worst Drug is Crystal

I think the worst drug is Crystal. The example I have is I see white people off it in Hayward and they go crazy off it.

I haven't met any family off of it yet but if I did I will just talk about them to make them feel bad, and I will stay away from them. I haven't had my own battle with drugs, but I just try to stay away from it.

The last time I cried was today. I cry because I am locked up all day, and I'd rather be at home with my family or doing other things.

-Edward

From The Beat: That's smart, to know that it's a drug you want to stay away from no matter what. And it's good that you can cry from the pain. There's nothing more sad than a person who wants to cry but can't. We hope you get out soon, and stay out!

Off to Nevada

What's up Beat? Well today I'm a fill you in on what 's happening in my case and my life. Well in my case I'ma be out this busy ass hall. I'm leaving to ROP like in a month and I ain't wait to get my special visit because I haven't hugged my mom and my siblings in three months, going to be four.

I get happy when I see my mom, 'cause when I go to Nevada I know she ain't going to visit me all the way over there, and I don't want her to waste that much gas just to see me for an hour. Instead she can use the money for bills or something useful. In my life it's been OK but I'm here in this weak ass hall.

But my mom and family are doing OK. That's the only thing that wakes me up in the morning to continue my day. I been OK, but these bootsie ass staff haven't gave me a phone call to talk to her. Well that's all Beat.

-Arave

From The Beat: Have you started asking yourself the hard questions about what you want to do when you get out to ROP? They have programs there, and school, and people who can help you get your future on point so that you can be home with your family and siblings for real. What's your plan?

Bad Thoughts in My Head

I'm not feeling The Beat this week and I don't feel like writing, So many bad thoughts in my head, I just feel like fighting.

So much stress on my mind and my body can't take it, I don't feel so good so when I smile I'm really faking.

Don't know if I could trust God 'cause he took my lil' brother, Can't stop the tears 'cause I'm worried about my mother.

I'm goin' through some thangs but the staff don't see, They might think I'm OK 'cause they really don't know me,

I wanna go so far, it really don't matter where, Tell the president forget the world 'cause Teddy don't care.

Try to tell staff about my anger, but I don't think they listening, They gon' wish they would've talked when Teddy start tripping.

-Teddy

From The Beat: We hope that writing about the bad thoughts and stress helped you get some of it out of your heart. You have shown so much "grace under pressure" so far, it's not surprising that sometimes it feels like too much. But no matter what, you will always have the solace of the paper and pen, ready to hear what you have to say. Peace.

I Have to Love Me

Everybody I ever know or ever been close to has turned their back on me and stabbed me in mind. Yeah I am the one who believes in forgiveness and moves on, but I learned that when people see that in me they take it for granted, and make me feel low about myself like I'm not important.

But somebody once told me recently that I have to love me. Love what I can do for myself. Love what I stand for. Love what I am. I'm not gonna let myself be compared to some ground beef you buy in Safeway. I need to start loving myself.

-Lady Floss

From The Beat: It's good to hear you writing like this, because yes, it's one of the most powerful skills a you can learn, to treat yourself with straight up loving kindness. And anyone you know who doesn't treat you that way doesn't deserve your precious time!

Ain't My Thing

What's up Beat! This is yo' boy Lil Man from Oakland. This is all about going to the hood, boy. Man, I love the hood. That's all I know. But I miss my big bras Gusto and Dady.

But really I miss my mother more, she passed away. But I gotta stay strong for her, do good things, like going to school. But that ain't my type of thing.

My thing is to sell drugs or take pills. It makes me feel good bra, really good, man fuck school I'm too hood. Forget this fake ass ninjas in here, always talking about guns and never doing anything about it. See y'all in the Oakland streets.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Reading this was like watching a man battle himself on paper. One side feels the love and loss of his mother and wants to succeed for her, and then the other side is trying to bury that pain in street living. Is it stressful dealing with these two sides that pull you in opposite directions?

Tears

Tears is something that everybody sheds. The last time I cried was when I lost my brother. Yes I think that men cry because say that you lost someone you love, like your parent. That is going to make you cry.

Sometimes I feel like crying but I don't because I try to stay strong for my family. Like when I see my mom and dad through the glass window, it hurts me a lot. And knowing how much time I'm looking at, it hurts me a lot too.

-Charles

From The Beat: What do you do when you start to feel bad? Do you have people you write to, do you call your mom, do you write? Are there books you read or staff you talk to? We're sorry to think of the pain of seeing your parents through glass, but it's good to know they are visiting you!

Cry Freddy Cry

It's the same to me, some people know me in this unit as Baby Mack, but I ain't bustin', but you might hear me say open the door gas, or see me talk about how I was getting' cash

But my car crashed and now I'm in hell

Some people call it the Hall

Some people call it jail

Man I wish you can get out on bail

Looking at days gon' by and asking myself why

Freddy sometime be talking to myself saying cry Freddy

cry, Knowing we should've painted the town,

Knowing how my so-called friend get down.

I pray to God that he help me get around.

-Lil' Fred

From The Beat: Good rhymes in bad times/Now you gotta stop these crimes /live your life right, no more cry Freddy cry/You can make it all better if you try Freddy try!

My Battle

I think the worst drug is crack cocaine. I would tell my family to go to rehab or to try to shake, that 'cause it can't bring nothing to you or your family problems and sadness. I have seen crack lead a person to steal from someone they love.

I had to battle against drinking. Every time I would feel stressed I would drink. It would make me not worry about nothing. I want to be alcohol free - because it can make you do some out of pocket stuff, like punching windows and stomping out car windshields.

-Dirty

From The Beat: The dirty truth is that alcohol can be a terrible drug, and it's easy to abuse. But with ads everywhere, rappers talking about it in songs, and a liquor store on every corner, it seems like it's always there as a temptation. Do you ever wonder what your life would be like if you quit drinking (and all other drugs) once and for all?

Heroin

I think the worst drug is heroin. I don't have any experience with the drug. But I've seen what it has done to people, so that's why I chose it.

When people do heroine they lose track of their lives, they base their lives on the drugs and spend all their money on it. It's one of the most addictive dugs and deadly drugs and a lot of people catch diseases when they do it, because they share needles.

-Jason

From The Beat: True, heroin destroys lives. And it's a hard drug to quit, but it is possible. Do you know people who have quit heroin? Or quit any other drugs they were addicted to?

Crying Over Loss Of Freedom And Family

When I came to Juvenile Hall I cried. When I was adopted I cried because I wasn't happy. I cried because I knew that I'm not going to see my other brothers anymore, at least for a long time.

-Edwin

From The Beat: We think that losing your freedom and losing your family are both excellent reasons for tears. Now it's time to decide what you want to achieve in your life despite the pain of the past... and to come up with a plan for getting it.

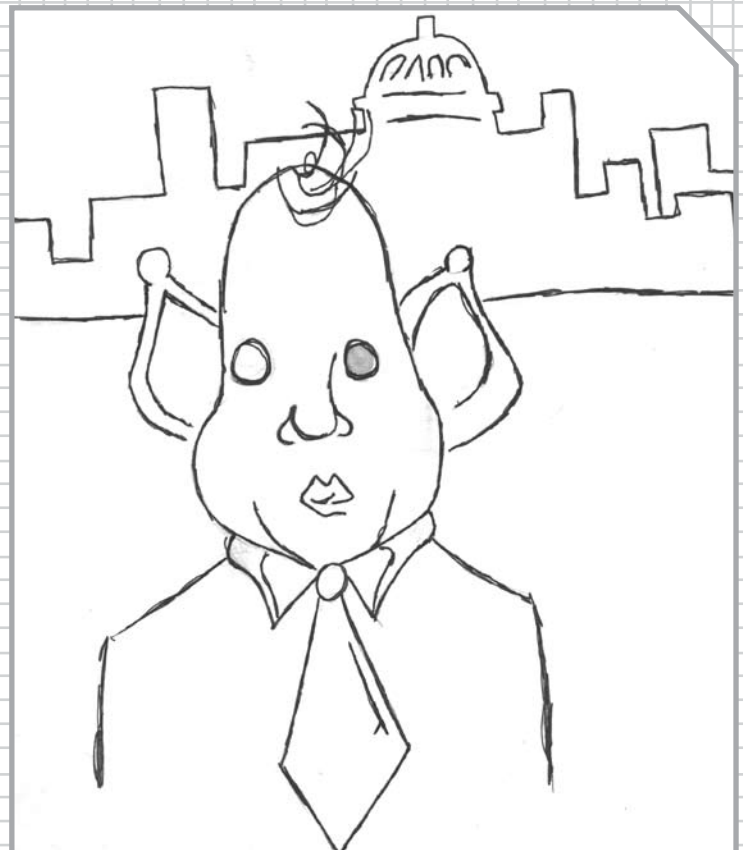
The Last Time I Cried Was When My Homie Got Killed

The last time I cried was when one of my homies got killed.

My mom came to visit me and she told me what happened but I didn't cry when she was tellin' me. It hit me when I was in my room. That was the last time I cried. RIP Wicho.

-B

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear that you lost a friend. Were you very close to him? Did you know his family? Did thinking about his death make you think about all the violence around us and how we can stop it?



Meth is the Worst Drug

The worst drug is meth cause my mom used to smoke meth, and she was always high, and she never watched me and my brothers. She just got high all day.

She stopped 'cause she was killing herself.

-Lil' Boogie

From The Beat: Wow, you have lived through some difficult times - you've learned the hard way about how deadly meth can be. At the same time, your mother seems to be fighting her addiction. Has your relationship with her improved since she quit using it? Is she in better shape?



Another Chance

The last time I cried was yesterday because I called my grandmother and begged her to let me come back home. She said "yes". I was happy.

Now, I've learned from my mistakes. I don't need to run away from home just to be wit my friends. I could just call them or wait until the weekend to see them. Now, if I would have just done that in the first place, I would have never came to juvie and never been in a group home or nothing.

But now I am very thankful 'cause I have a very loving grandmother who is giving me another chance to change my life in her house and my dad's out of jail and I have a lil' brother on the way so I got good things in store for me. So now I am going to go back to school, get an education, and enjoy my teenage life.

-Ericka

From The Beat: It does sound like you have much to be grateful for -being reunited with your family, which obviously means a great deal to you- and the prospect of a fresh start. However, your grandmother won't give you endless chances, and you will probably be on probation after you get released from the hall, so you're going to need to be VERY careful and stay away from situations that could get you arrested. We're only repeating what you wrote in your own piece, but we're really hoping that you will remember your sense of gratitude and stick to your plan for freedom.

Change...

Not the change in yo' hand but the change in my plan.

I get a new chance and I plan to stay solid and do what I gotta do

, no matter what my "friends" say about it.

Change,

change my surrounding and the ones I kick it with.

Change my whole life.

It ain't about hitting licks.

No more getting caught up doin' the same ol' shhh.

It's time for a change because I want to make it.

Change: I gotta put myself first before I be ridin' in a hearse.

These streets are cold and the youngsta's are bold.

Put a female on the track and let her sell her own soul.

Changed my street name from Savage to Jocelyn.

I'm gonna change for the better because that's the name of the game.

Two things in life that are constant, and that's change and chance.

-Nasty Tiney-bo

From The Beat: We can feel the energy you put into this piece. You are getting ready to get out and to reinvent yourself. You will always be the same you, of course, but hopefully you aren't going to fall for the same games and the same traps out there. You are ready, maybe more ready than you have ever been before, for genuine change. We like your philosophical ending, by the way.

I Want To Go Home

Well, I just want to say that I cry, but for someone to say that they don't, that is not good. I be crying because I don't want to be here no more. I just want to go home with my mama and my baby girl. She is one, and I love her and my mama and I miss them a lot. I hope I go home on Friday because my baby misses me and my mama misses me, too. When I do go home, I am going to be good. I won't come here no more. This is my first and last time to come here. The end.

-Clairice

From The Beat: We hope it's your first and last time, too. Now that you're a parent, you have to think about your baby before you get into a situation that could get you arrested or hurt. She's depending on you.

Addictive!

I think the worst drug is heroin 'cause I've seen people do that before and it seems like it's very addictive. And the reason why I think it's the worst drug because you have to inject that drug. And if a person has a disease and you use the same needle you can catch that disease too.

I have no family or friend going through this drug but I'm just giving my opinion. I want to be drug free so later on in life I'll have no problems with my body system and so I can have a long period of time to enjoy my life without drugs. And when I have a family I want it to be normal.

-Luis

From The Beat: We think it's great that you're already thinking in that mind frame! Drug free is the best way to go especially if you don't want any problems with your health later on in the future. Sounds like you're real anti-drug. You should try to educate your peers so they can see the negative effects of drugs, so they can stop using them.

Placement

Well what's up Beat. I'm just waitin' to go to my placement 'cause right now I'm missin' out on hella chips. Once I get there I'm gonna keep it movin' on 'em as soon as I get there. 'Cause you know Lil' Chill is the last one standing on the block getting chips.

- Chill

From The Beat: We hope that you do your program and move on with your life. But as for you missing out on chips. You are missing out on way more than your chips. You're missing out on your freedom, your education and the power to be whatever you want to be. Don't limit yourself to just being the last one standing on the block. Why don't you be the last one standing in a big hotel that you own. Set your sights on something big and think about the bigger picture.

Sippin' and Trippin'

Sipping on some purple lean

Posted on the block almost falling asleep

So I start to do it moving trying to stay awake

But I look at the time it's kind of late

But I got money to make

But I'm tripping 'cause of this purple naked lady I just took

Now the pill kicked in

Now I'm mad and I strip a little ninja for his book bag

Know what I mean?

I woke up found out it was a dream

'Cause I fell asleep on this purple lean.

-Lil' Charlie

From The Beat: You are most definitely slipping if your sipping on some purple lean. You're tripping if you think you can just go around and rob people for their book bags. That's a pretty messed up thing to do. How would you feel if your little sister or brother were walking to school and some bully takes their book bag? You wouldn't approve of that would you? It's not right to take things from people. You wouldn't like it either. So why do it?

Waiting to be free

Waitin' to be Free, I can't wait to be back on the real though, dawg. These judges and public pretenders be tryna work a ninja. They don't want a real ninja free 'cause I'm a beast in these streets, just ask about me. I can't wait to be smokin' on hella dro' sippin' on hella bo' with my ninjas. But anyway just free Lil Te Though

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: If this is what you plan to do when you get out, how long do you honestly expect to stay out? The life you want to go back to is a ticket straight back to the hall, or worse. What's your plan B?

When I Get Out

Q-vole Beat this Goofy, I'm still locked up. Well I didn't like your topics for today so I'm going to write about me when I get out of the Hall. The first thing I would like to do when I get out is to get high and get drunk with my homies and meet the new homies that got jump in my hood and then get a lil jaina, You feel me! Then do what I got to do with the lil' jaina. And then after all that I would like to hug my lil' sis. And tell her that I miss her.

-Goofy

From The Beat: Some of us don't realize it but some of us live a life making mistakes. Here you are in jail and before you've even been released you planning on doing things and being in situations that gonna get you sent back to jail. You'd think a person would get out of jail and want to be with his family. What is it about these drugs that make some people think the way that they do?

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried was when I read the Bible. I cried because everything in the Bible is truth and I love to cry to the men up above. When you cry to God he hears everything you have to say and I asked God for forgiveness and he give it to me, so when ever I read the word of God it make me want to cry because he forgive me for all my sins that I put upon myself and I am thankful for everything he has done for me! He is my friend, my father, my everything. God will come to Earth one day and take us all with him

-Antwan

From The Beat: Your faith is so powerful, it helps you feel that everything is going to be alright, it gives you humility so you can admit to the wrongs you've done and it gives you hope to keep moving forward. Let that faith help you feel strong enough to try new ways of living in the world. Let your faith help you stand strong and fight off the old temptations which will undoubtedly come up and try to pull you off the righteous path.

Yes, I Cried

The last time I cried were after my mom left, that first time she visited me. I cried because I realized all the damage I was causing her.

Also, because I would remember her face. I didn't want to cry in front of her because I knew it would only make it worse. I also cried because me and one of my best friends got separated, and I got a message from her and from what it sounded like, she was mad or something.

I don't really understand why. I mean it's nothing to get mad about, and if you think about it, it wasn't even like that. I don't know - I guess things happen for a reason, right? But I still love her and miss her. Like Angel says, "a lil too much guys".

-Vany

From The Beat: That's worth crying over. Cry when you feel like crying. You'll stop when you're ready to stop. Then you can get to work on the roots of your problems.

The Worst Drug

I think crystal meth is the worst drug ever. So many I know either died from it, overdosed, or are somewhere strung out on it. But yeah, I heard it's also hard to get off of, so that's why people have knock tendencies.

But me personally - I don't judge a book by its cover, because to each her own. But man, this topic is deep. I think there are bad drugs out there, but meth hits you the hardest. And so many people wanna get off of it. But can't, because they are so addicted. But I really can't say nothing because I drink, smoke trees, and sometimes pop pills. But I don't be fiening like that.

If I had to choose, it would definitely be the trees. So, in some way I can relate to really liking a drug. But why one that hurts you so much? I don't know yall, but think ahead and make better choices if you wanna live and not be 6 feet under.

Well, my birthday's coming soon, so celebrate with me, or for me.

-Sha T

From The Beat: We're singing Happy Birthday to you right this minute. Can you hear us. Are we 'on tune'? We also suggest to you that once you are out, stay sober and focus to truly capture your dreams of living a better life!

The Best Feeling...Is The High Feeling

Damn, smoking that shhh makes me wana fly. It's kind of a trip how it can be your best friend or your worst enemy - that maryjane, some of those skittles, those mushrooms. Man, I can go on. Makes you want to try some more and see what other feelings you can get.

Some people may say that it ain't the best thing to do, or it ain't healthy. Ha, it's kind of funny though, that I find myself having to say goodbye. I never thought I would. Maybe one day I'll come back to our affair. It was the best, but in the end you played me. I honestly don't know about the second chance.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Take our advice. You're undergoing a healthy divorce. And you're getting to keep your sanity.

Street Life Over

Man my name Lil' Ed. Man I'm finish with the street life. Reason why is because this street life aint cool cause lil kids getting killed by drive bys and the whole nine. Being in the street life got me here in the first place. You feel me!

I'm going to still go and kick it with the fam but not like that. I'm going to be in and out like a fast food restaurant. Cause you don't know who might come threw busting. I aint no mark just cause I don't want to be in the streets--it's that I been in them a long time to be cool, real talk!

I got a lil brother and a family to live for. I ain't about to die to these streets over some he say--she say stuff. Man I have had more then a brah die to this game. I also have three family members doing life to this game and they been telling me to jump out and I'm out of it. Just because I'm out the game don't think I want get active on you.

-Lil' Ed

From The Beat: Anyone doing life or sitting six feet deep will tell you that the game isn't worth it. It may be difficult, but you're doing the right thing by getting out early and giving yourself a chance to succeed. It takes guts for the average young men to do what you have done. Stay being that leader that you are.

The Last Time I Cried

The last time I cried was when I was a little boy and pops said everything was going to be alright; cousin gets killed—I can still feel the relationship that was built.

Too bad the streets don't understand the hurt that I felt but me and God knows! They have to walk around with that guilt.

Karma is a mutha, so two weeks later I seen the ninja on the front cover of the Oakland Tribune and he was killed.

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: So the guy who killed your cousin got killed soon after? Looking back on it, maybe you felt relief to have that indirect revenge. We are sorry for the pain you had to deal with, having lost an important relationship at such a young age. The killer's family probably feels a whole lotta pain too. The streets really are so vicious—they don't care about your pain or anybody's... Why do you think you went out and lived a life in them streets if you knew how tough it was from such a young age? Is there any way to stop all this bloodshed? Everybody killing each other just gone wipe out a whole generation.

Thinking

What's up Beat. I'm just sitting here, waiting to go to Colorado. I've been thinking a lot lately, mainly about what I want to do when I turn 18.

I've been thinking about Skitzo, and now I can't stand him, but I miss him at the same time. I've also been thinking about Cartoon a lot and how I can't wait to see him and tell him that I love him.

When I get back from Colorado I just want to do good and stay out of trouble. I won't even try to be slick about anything, because you always get caught up in the end.

Being here this time has been a big eye opener for me. The last two times I was here I really didn't care and I knew I was going to come back, But this time I want to change.

-Corina

From The Beat: We don't know about Skitzo, and Cartoon. They sound like characters from a comic book. Time for you to stick to reality. You have work to do, and you know what it is.

Knowing Right From Wrong

Hey Beat what's up! Well the topic is...wait for it... The last time I cried.

Well the last time I cried was yesterday! I've been here for a minute, 'bout two and a half weeks, I got locked up for being stupid! And straying from the path of God for a while. I was on the fence of living life laid back or going out and living life for God. I was raised in a Christian home, well knowing right from wrong. My mom and "dad" who I wrote about last time have taught me about right and wrong. Well, needless to say I did my own thang and guess where it got me! Nowhere fast.

When I got here the second night I cried tears of anger, tears of hurt, tears of grief, knowing what I did and now I took life and family for granted. I'm sure you know the kinds of tears I'm talking about!

But I found God more than I would have on the outs. God is showing me so much of what I have been missing in Him. Now as of yesterday I've been cryin' the tears of joy, tears of love, tears of peace and freedom in Christ! I now know what I need to do when I get out, and never take anything for granted.

-Tony

From The Beat: Do you have a church you will go to on the outs, with people who can support you on this new path you want to take? Because it does seem as if your faith gives you a great deal of joy and strength. So long as you stay connected to it!

Group Home Soon

What's up with it Beat? I went to court last week and I got some good news. I'm ago to a group home next month. I can't wait to get out of this borin' ass hall. I turned 16 in here so you feel me, I'ma do it big when I get out.

The first thing I'm do is go chill with my family and with my homies. Then I'm gonna go to my girl's house to get a lil' sum sum, you feel me? All right then Beat, I'm out.

-B

From The Beat: So long as you aren't breaking any laws, we are happy to imagine you celebrating. Just make sure you stay legit this time!

My Uncle

My uncle mean a lot to me because he tell me everything right, and people on the streets say you got a good uncle. He gets along with everybody and they like him and I look up to him. He's a hard working man. He is about 5"10 and weigh 180-185.

-Cell-Bo

From The Beat: Looking up to people such as your uncle will get you a long way and teach a few tips about being a man and handling your responsibilities. What is one responsibility you have learned from being around your uncle that you haven't already told us?

Meth

The worst drug to me is Meth. I aint never touched it before but I seen what it could do to people. That shhh be getting me mad cause I see cute girls on Meth and it makes them look real like ugly. I would never do that kind of drug. All you do is smoke pure purple and sip bo, feel? And I'm a dancer too, so I can't be on hella drugs like that.

-King Tonio

From The Beat: Drugs will ruin your life and if you think we're lying just take a look at the dope game down the road. Yeah meth is a nasty one, but whether you sippin lean or smoking dope, it ain't gonna be good for you in the long run either. Maybe take a little longer than meth to mess up your life, but don't think it's all good with weed, cause it ain't. If you want to live a free, focused life, if you want to be a skilled dancer and keep dancing as you get older, drugs are going to drag you down and create negativity in your relationships with others and yourself.

Educated Gangsta

What up Beat and Beat readers. I hope all is well and everything is going good for everyone, despite your current situation. I just thought I'd share with everyone that I'm only two tests away from getting my GED! I'm hella excited because I'll be the second person out of six of us to have graduated. And after I get that I'm gonna take some college classes!

Yup, India's going to college! I'm gonna be an educated gangsta. It's going to be good, a fun experience for me.

To all who hate school or don't care about a diploma - trust me - when you receive that shhh it feels so good. And I'm gonna throw it in all my teachers' faces who put me down. But go for it because you'll feel much better about yourself?

I still got two more tests, so keep me in your prayers that I pass.

To all who know me, stay up keep your head at level shoulders square. Maintain a solid composure. Stand tall! Much love and respect ... I'm gone...poof...ghost

-India

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a real plan. Keep us posted. We love to hear from folks who are on their way to good things. It's very inspiring to read a success story. We eager to read yours. Thanks for being a part of The Beat Within.

Turn It Around

Yo! What's up with the Beat? Man, I can't wait till I get out of jail. A ninja don't know what he got till it's gone and right now I'm missing everything right now, from home cooked meals from my mom, to playing with my nieces and nephews, all of that right now is priceless but this the stuff that comes with it when we out there carrying guns and selling dope--being incarcerated.

But this is juvenile, I still got a chance to turn it around because the next step from here aint going to be nice. That's why when I get out I'm going to take care of my business to avoid the pen I'm going to finish school, etc. to see that smile on my mom face.

-Cameron

From The Beat: That's how it is being in jail and the unfortunate reality for far too many of us: not knowing what we are gambling with until it's too late. And you end up sitting in someone's cage like the animal they paint you to be, thinking about all that good stuff you missing. Stay thinking how you're thinking and good things will come to you. You right, it ain't gonna be easy. You gotta be determined, follow through on those plans and show them that you can get out of the game and be a new kind of leader.

I Wish I Could be Free

I wish I could be free back on the block running the streets,
chilling with my patnas, listening to beats
back at home with my family,
doing stuff together that makes us happy;
celebrating our special times in the studio,
spitting some rhymes,
ridin in a whip that's top of the line
feeling myself getting hella high,
get in new clothes that's fly
run n the hood wit my brother
I wish I could be free to kiss my mother
it makes me mad being in jail
it feels like I'm going through hell
I wish this was fake but it's so real
it makes me mad waking up in this place
sitting in my room thinking bout my case
I wish I could be free get out this place

-Boobie

From The Beat: We wish you could be free too but these are the consequences of doing what you are doing. Maybe the future will permit you another chance—we hope you get smart and get out of the street life. You gotta find something else to live for and a new way to live. Otherwise you can easily end up dead or locked up again. You don't want either one, right?

My Time Is Coming

I'm about to leave this facility forever. I can't wait to leave, I have been here going on eight months. That is a long time to just be sitting in one place. It starts to really get to you sometimes. But all that is coming to an end in a month or two, it all depends on what they say when I go to court.

But I'm happy anyway. I really wish I could go home I don't think I can handle any more jail time. But I have to deal with it the best I can. That's why I just sit back and watch.

-Boo Nasty

From The Beat: We also hope that home is in your near future and that indeed you are retired from going to jail. Remember that it is you that control your destiny. From driving drunk to posting a street, there is a lot you get to decide about. Your choices help put you in the way of freedom or being locked up. We hope you make choices that keep you out of the lock-up (although we always like hearing from you—why don't you write us when you are on the outs and we can publish it in our "Beat Without" section.)

Missing My Grandma

The last time I cried was when I had to wait till the following week until my grandma came to visit because she couldn't come. I also cried because I really love my grandma and I was hoping she would come visit me and I could see her.

-Sed-B

From The Beat: We're sure she also love you my friend, did you get the chance to see her that following week? Is the love of your grandmother (and missing her) enough to make some changes so you get to see more of her and less of the hall?

Back to the Hood

When I get out I'm going to visit one of my old friends, I haven't seen him since I was twelve because he got locked up. Before he got locked up we always had fun. We played basketball, tag, hide and go seek in the dark. I mean he was a brother to me.

When I moved to North Oakland he was the one that showed me around the hood I was eight at the time. We became hella close over the years. I wished that I knew his address and PFN number so I could of sent him letters and put money on his book. I talked to him the other day and he told me he doing cool. I just told him to stay safe because it's getting hectic out there. Most of our friends are getting shot up

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: We hope that eventually you two will have a chance to get together and teach others that don't know the definition of friendship how to be a friend. We hope that y'all love spread far and wide and touch a world where friends are killing friends.

RIP My Right Hand Man

From running from my moms 'cause we don't want to come home,
to chasing them dollars getting on--stunting in the zone.
From waking up early on them odd jobs,
only person in the world had my back no matter what,
Even when I was wrong my ninja still ain't give a shhh.
Man bra I miss you, still think you left before your time,
but like you always told me "A though, it be like that.
sometimes"

RIP Bzbo

-Young MarkieBo

From The Beat: The average person usually die the way they decided to live. The world is bigger than just wanting to be seen and known before someone was to steal you from your place on this earth. Don't want to be like those you see that die young—want to be like those who hold the formula to a long, healthy life. Peace out.

Punishment

It feels like God is punishing me for something I did in the past. It seems like when you're in jail it allows you to think on the problems you have in your life. It's like when I am being punished the world stops, but at the same time life is coming to an end. We are getting older; life doesn't wait on anybody.

I think He is punishing me for disrespecting my mother. I went years talking to my mom like she wasn't nothing. Now that I am older and wiser I can see the mistakes I made.

-Mississippi

From The Beat: It's not hard to see that you're a bright intelligent young person. Sometimes we do get the chance to analyze our lives to decide what we want to do with them. It's a good thing to take a look at what you been doing and decide whether that's a good way to keep going. Maybe you are allowing your old life to come to an end. You have a chance to make a fresh start, and we hope you take it for real.

Best And Worst Drug

The best drug to me right now and always will be is weed, because I've been around that since I was a baby and I've always liked the smell, so finally when I was twelve I learned how to smoke it for real and its been on ever since...

I also like popping pills from time to time, only occasionally when I go to clubs to meet some bad ones. The worst drug to me is heroin because those fiends are the worst; they have no future, and they always nod off and they have no idea what their doing with themselves.

-G-Weeze

From The Beat: Most people can't do drugs and keep up with their responsibilities, and you can end up irritable, unmotivated, or end up down and out. We agree that heroin has a negative impact quicker, but if you really think about it, you'll see that even Marijuana can bring you down if you don't have a strong mind. Many people don't let their babies/kids be around drugs, including pot. Do you feel okay about the fact that you have been around weed since you were a baby? If you were a parent would you smoke pot around your kids?

An Update

What's up Beat? Well this is Luv here. Dang, well my court got extended again 'til August, but they said that I can get released by my PO before, if she feels like it, and all the paper work goes through. I turned 18 not that long ago, so I'm going to Maripasa Lodge and am gonna be there 45-60 days, then be at Bill Wilson Trans housing. I love you guys in this unit, I'm there for you.

-Luv

From The Beat: Hey Luv - do you have your diploma. If not, make that your next priority. Then think about community college. Two years of good work there is the ticket to a four year college. And then - there'll be no stopping you. Get busy.

RIP Geez

The last time I cried was the other day in my room. The other day when I found out some bad news from my brother that one of my closest friends, basically my cousin, was killed in East Palo Alto.

In peace my ninja "Geez" you will never be forgotten, we gone rip it out for you you'll never be forgotten we gone rip it out for you and best believe I'm getting it tatted as soon as I touchdown, It's really hard for real ninjas to cry because we been through so much pain but when one of my loved ones die I gotta shed a few tears feel me?

-G-weeze

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear you've lost someone so close to you. We're sure you've lost others too...Especially hard when you are locked up and can't do what you'd want to do (get tatted, go to the funeral, etc) to heal the pain. At the same time, you know man this is the price of the game you inside of. Does it make you think about wanting to save your own life? When will the price be high enough for you and your ninjas to get out?

Ninjas Not Wit It

Ninjas be high power faking talking 'bout what they not about giving info to them cops, come to jail talking hard but really be actors. They call themselves hittas because they be around factors

and convince they self that they active.

They talk hard but aint never even gassed sixteen bars. The streets made me a man and made these square ninjas marks

-Lil' Kt

From The Beat: What makes the world beautiful is that everything isn't the same and a person can actually choose from a variety of options. Just because someone isn't like you don't underestimate that person to be a mark.

Crying

I can't remember the last time I cried because I had to be like six years old or something. But I do know I did not cry when my mom died or when I got stabbed because crying is a sign of weakness, which is for women. When I was little my dad would Beat the shhh out of me if I cried, so I don't cry at all anymore

-Bg

From The Beat: Crying can be viewed as a sign of weakness depending upon whose opinion you ask. Of course you need to be in a safe place when you crying, but to allow a natural emotion to come through you when you need relief isn't weak. It shows that you still have a heart and that you care about people. Crying also helps you start healing from big losses so you don't stay high level hurt for a long long time.

When My Big Brother Died

The last time I cried was when my big brother died. He was like my best friend so I called him my big brother. He was the first person I didn't mind going out with my sister. Me and him always had each other's back.

Then one day he was in the car with some people and this car rolled up on them. They shot everybody in the car. He lived for a couple days.

After about three days he flat-lined. That was the last time I cried.

-Stacy

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this story - he must have been a great friend. As your 'big brother' what advice do you think he'd have for you now, what would he want you to be doing with your life?

The Worst Drug

What's cracking Beat. I think one of the worst drugs is crystal meth. I think that's some crazy ass shhh. That drug got people talking to themselves, thinking they be hearing voices, and shhh. That's some drastic stuff right there. I don't know - that's what I think people loose their houses, their kids, come on now - who does that girl be having sex with.

Anything that walks for that stuff. I just think crystal meth and PCP is the worst to do. I use both but I never ever got hook on it. I'd say I got more hook on PCP than meth. I haven't messed with meth in three years and I only smoked it a couple times. PCP - that was my high. I don't know why. I just did. But I'm coo'. I'll only stick with smoking bomb. Well, that's all.

-B

From The Beat: Save PCP for the veterinarians. And be really 'koo' by saying goodbye to bomb, too. The only thing you need to be hooked on is life itself. A clear head and a pure heart will help you find the happiness you deserve.

Last Time I Cried When My Cousin Died

The last time I cried is when my cousin Boonie died. That shhh hurted hella bad because it seemed like we was still together after it happened. He showed me so much, pulling all nights on the block, to smoking wet blunts, to drinking eighty dolla bottles of 1800.

I miss you bra and we gone keep it lit for Boonie. He was a good role model for those who looked up to him.

He's always telling me to stay in school and be something in life. He's a positive person. Shine in paradise Boonie

-Lil' Nef

From The Beat: We're sorry that a good friend has been taken away from you in theses streets. We can see he really meant a lot to you and we hope that the positive things that he taught and told you will stay with you forever and that you go beyond talking about positivity but really live it too.

Leaving Out of State

What's up, Beat?

I just found out that I am going outta state, somewhere down South. I don't know where yet, but hopefully it will be cool out there.

At least I get home passes every other month or so. It will be good for me. I won't think about running cause I'm not going to know where I'm at! I will be leaving in like two weeks or so. The only thing I don't want to do is fly on no plane because I'm afraid of heights.

-Cheyenne

From The Beat: Flying can be scary because we aren't in control. We're completely dependent on the airplane and the pilot, ground control tower, etc. However, when it comes to the rest of your life, and this new placement, you ARE in control. You get to decide how you're going to do your program. When you're the one making the changes, it can be exhilarating. Get ready to spread your wings!

Don't Know The Last Time I Cried

Last time I cried I really don't know. But I know when I cry I mean it. When I cry it's for a reason not 'cause I want attention. When I cry the reasons be somebody died that I loved or I'm upset about something. I'm not like most weenies nowadays.

-Baby Joker

From The Beat: It's good that you're not like most people who think they're too tough to cry. There is nothing wrong with crying. It's an emotion we all feel whether we cry 'cause we're laughing way too much, or because we are upset about something or sad. Thanks a lot Baby Joker for keeping it real!

What I Think About

Sometimes I think I will die when I get out. I think about my dead friends. I see those people that I've seen die every night. I think about how to make it in life when everything is bad. I think about the only good person in my life. I think about how the world is changing and how I make the place I call home worse everyday, and try to make myself feel better when I'm in the wrong.

I think about the people I've hurt around me and try to make it better but the streets is where my hearts at. A lot of fake people hate on me about the littlest things. I think about what knock is going to put one in my chest, and when I'll get robbed by a hater. I want to know will I die at 18 or 25. This is what I think about.

-Jasper

From The Beat: Like Tupac says "I see death around the corner" but yet if you see death around the corner why do you continue to stay around it. If death is that heavy on your mind maybe you should go take a trip to a different part of the world where death isn't on too many people's mind. You need to get away and put yourself in a different mind set. Only you can do that. You make the choices you want to make nobody else can do it for you.

It's Hard

The last I cried was because I was mad. I was mad because I was going to visiting and some kid started talking smack and I got mad at him and punched his window. Then the staff seen me and said go back to my room.

I got mad and started punching my door and cussin' out the system. And then he called some other staff so they could calm me down and they told me that I was going to go to the no contact visiting room.

-Adrian

From The Beat: Man it sounds like you got pretty upset. But you know what shake it off. If some kid is talking smack at you. Just ignore him. He's the one that's going to look stupid. You're not going to accomplish anything by punching his window and cussing at staff. So next time just ignore him and be happy that you got a visit.

Bad

Drugs are bad. When people do drugs like crack, cocaine, heroin, meth, They usually change. They become hooked on the drug.

-a thought

From The Beat: You're absolutely right. Drugs change the way people act and think. Why do you think people choose not to be themselves?

Crack Is the Worst Drug

In my opinion, I think crack cocaine is the worst drug. The reason why I think it's the worst drug is because I've seen with my own eyes what it can do to you. I had a close friend of mine named Shawn Harris who died just recently from crack cocaine.

He was very much older than I and he was hella cool. Didn't bother anyone, always was nice, but one day his wife called me and asked, "Did I hear about Shawn?" And she told me he had overdosed on crack. It hurt when she told me. But some people just don't know when enough is enough.

After Shawn's death, I didn't want to deal with selling drugs anymore. He was a close friend to me and I miss him. So I dedicate this Beat article to a lost friend. That's why I think crack cocaine is the worst drug.

-April

From The Beat: This is a heartfelt tribute to your friend. Crack and other drugs have claimed the lives of so many decent, loving people. Crack is evil in its addictive powers, and people often just can't tell when they've smoked a dangerous amount.

Heroin

The worst drug to me is heroin. I don't have a deep, tragic story on why I think it's the worst drug, I just do. I mean, I could deal with a crackhead; don't get me wrong, that's horrible too, but heroin is just hella nasty. By using it you're not just wasting away, but you could catch fatal diseases.

Even though I smoke weed, we should all stop using drugs. Starting with myself.

-Skittles

From The Beat: What do you think will be the hardest part about quitting weed?

Don't Know What To Do Next

Man I been in jail so long I don't know what to do. I did everything I can but I can't think of my next move man. This shhh is hard being without friends or family. Man if you were here, you would be able tell by the look on my face. I'm tired of this shhh man. That's why when I get out I'm a go to my program and do the time and go home, 'cause man it's hard being in jail alone.

Every time I go visiting and see one of my bra's up in here then I go to my room I'm like what to do now? What will happen? Why is this happening to me? Why? But I never get an answer. So I don't know what happening on the out's. So I don't know what to do. For reals man this shhh stresses me out. I need my family and my ninjas I'm out Beat. .

-Lil' J-tuda

From The Beat: If you're looking for answers they are simply right in front of your face. You just don't want to hear them. Things happen for a reason, you have to sit there and think. Why are you in there. Maybe it's for your own good. We know that it's not cool being behind bars away from your loved ones. But think about it. If you were out in them streets maybe danger was heading your way. You should be thankful for what you got right now. You will be out soon, and we hope that you do whatever you can to stay out of jail. That way you won't find yourself asking the same questions, looking for the same obvious answers.

Rest In Peace Junior

What's up Beat? Just want to let you know I lost my homey that was like a brother to all my homies and to me. He had all the respect from everybody. He was coo' to get high with and drunk with. He always had money to drop on some trees but the sad thing is that he died on his 21st birthday.

And I wasn't there because I was in a group home. I found out two days after that happened. I was really angry about what happened and still am! Well I got to go and do this little time I got left

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's sad when we lose friends or family that are close to us. We're sorry to hear about your homeboy. How can you honor your homey in a positive way? What can you learn from these experiences? Life is shorter than you think. So don't waste your time sitting behind those bricks. Get out and stay out. Enjoy life! 'Cause you don't know when it's going to be your turn. Handle your freedom right!

God

The last time I cried was yesterday, because I felt like I was missing something and that something was God.

People shed tears for sadness because they're stressin' or something has happened so bad that they need to shed tears to feel better or to even let out their emotions. Then there are tears of happiness, which people cry for joy.

People cry for happiness because, for example, they work hard to complete a goal that they set for themselves and they made it to finishing their goals. That brings tears of joy. Or when someone is let out of jail from doing time and they're happy to see their family. That would bring tears of joy. People cry for different reasons, but all reasons are good reasons.

-Chavira

From The Beat: We agree with you, experiencing emotion and letting it out (in a way that doesn't hurt anybody) is healthy. When you were thinking about God and it made you cry, do you think God heard you? Did you find comfort afterwards?

Crystal

The worst drug to me is crystal meth.

I've done everything from drinking to heroin and everything in between. But crystal is the worst drug to me because that's the only drug that ever got me addicted.

I was addicted to crystal for two years, and while I was addicted, I saw myself turn into a ugly ass tweaker. I would do things for money that I wouldn't normally do if I wasn't on crystal.

I decided to get my life together after one night when I was desperate enough to almost sell myself for money to get my next hit of crystal.

My homeboy that was with me had to beat my ass just to stop me from doin' it 'cause he knew that I wouldn't ever disrespect myself by doing that nasty ass shhh. He told some other homies that I was addicted to it and they beat the shhh outta me too! They beat my ass, they put me in the hospital, the hospital saw that I was on some type of drug and they detoxed me. If it wasn't for them beatin' my ass and not putting my ass in the hospital, then I would probably still be addicted to crystal. I thank them every time I get to see them, 'cause they saved my life.

-Guera

From The Beat: This definitely takes tough love to the extreme level. Did they have to beat you so bad that you got hospitalized? Couldn't they just take you to the hospital and say "she's out of control and needs help"? Well, the most important thing is that you detoxed and kicked meth. Do you think that you might have an addictive personality, or was meth just such a powerful drug that it sucked you in?

Worst Drug

I think the worst drug is Crystal Meth. I've never tried it, but it rots your teeth and makes you look a lot older. All I do is smoke grapes and drink. These are the only drugs I want in my life.

This my 8th time here and Juvenile hall. It's July 22nd and I've got court tomorrow. I've been here a month. Hopefully I get out. I might go to a group home. I hope this is my last time here.

-James

From The Beat: Any drug is just as bad because when you smoke or drink you are no longer yourself. And what's worse if you drink too much you can get poisoning or you can no longer think straight and you won't be able to talk, or drive, or let alone walk. We wish you luck and hope you don't come back too, but you have to change some of your bad habits. You can't expect to be drinking and smoking out on the street and not get into any trouble.

Drugs

I think that the worst drugs are all drugs except for weed. Heroin, coke, meth, PCP, and the list goes on, but to me they're all bad. They change who a person is and can cost them their lives. And the worst part is that the people using them don't see how bad it affects them. To me, weed isn't so bad because it won't kill you if you smoke it naturally, but all that chemical stuff is not the business.

-Caras

From The Beat: It is so sad to see friends, family, or neighbors get sucked into the downward spiral of addiction. What advice would you have for someone younger than you who was experimenting with hard drugs?

This Is It

It's Tuesday, July 22. I'm still in the hall, waiting to be released. I got court on the 30th & from what I know, I'll be getting a straight release on probation. My curfew is gonna be 10 o'clock. That's lightweight early... it's better than being in here. I really can't wait to get out.

I'm ready to make a change in my life, to start over. I miss my mama and little brother. What I did to them was wrong. They don't deserve to be the center of my anger. I learned to "get off on who I'm mad at".

I need to accept that my dad is an alcoholic and he is not capable of being the father I need him to be. It hurts, but it's real. I have a good mother who supports me in whatever I want to do, shelters me with a roof over my head, feeds me and takes care of me.

There are friendships I need to mend and friendships I need to end. I need to set my priorities straight. I just moved and I'm going to be attending a new school. I'm way behind in credits, which I am determined to recover this year. I made a promise to myself and others to stop smoking and drinking.

During the time I have been in here, I've been doing a lot of thinking, making a lot of decisions. I'm ready to grow up and be my own person. Being here is good and bad to me. It's good, because after the situation my mom and I went through, I needed some time from her. It's also good because maybe I needed to experience juvenile hall.

Maybe I needed to see that it's not a joke. I do know that I will never be coming back, no matter what the rumors say. I pray every night that the people that care about me won't give up on me, but I only know it will work if I don't give up on myself.

-Hope

From The Beat: Even though you will have left the hall when your excellent piece is published, we hope that you get to read it. You have given yourself (and others) some very wise advice about making changes. It's not easy, but it's possible.

I'm A Beast

What's good with The Beat? Well, this yo' boy V-Guttah takin' these weak-ass days one by one. Well anyways, they trying to wash a ninjaa fo' real. That shhh ain't cool at all. But I'ma still keep my head up, you dig. Whatever they throw at the table, I'ma be a beast about it and eat it all, then get out, you dig.

I can't wait, but till then I'm chillin'. Can't do nothin' but chill in this hole, ha ha ha ha. Can't hold me fo' that long. One day I'ma be out. I know it's goin' take time, but I'ma be out, you dig.

To all my haters, have yo' fun while you can 'cause once I step out, it's a wrap, you dig. To all that's doin' any time in any program, keep y'all heads up, and remember, we do time, time don't do us you dig. With that, I'm gone.

-V

From The Beat: We're not sure what you're planning for when you walk out of here, but we're not very encouraged by your message to your "haters." Be careful that you are not the one to get wrapped... We would love to read an entire piece from you explaining exactly what you mean when you (always) write: "We do time, time don't do us." How are you "doing" time, and how is time not doing you?

RIP Dango

Rest in peace Dee Dees, the real big homie of the year. It takes a real ninja to make a real ninja shed tears. After I heard, I didn't wanna believe it. I was in my room not feeling too good. I know the whole block cried when they heard about it.

Like I said, it takes a real ninja to make a real ninja shed tears. But man, we miss you already bra. I'm just sorry I can't go to your funeral bra. I wish I could, but I ain't getting out any time soon.

Them crackers used to always try and play you fo' real bra. They always tried to stop yo' shine, but they couldn't stop a real ninja from doing real things. You used to always be on shhh bra. Just can't believe they caught you. You know we gone hold it down for you bra. We love you bra. I'ma see you soon.

-Chris

From The Beat: We had to take out the lines threatening revenge, and we strongly urge you and your friends to find another way to honor the memory of Dee Dees. If you go after his killers, not only will you be putting yourself in greater danger, you'll be sending another group of innocent people (family, loved ones) to mourn yet another loss. When you say "the crackers" tried to play your friend, do you mean he was killed by white people? That would be very unusual, if true. (Homicide across racial lines is much less common than homicide within the same race.) Think carefully about what it means that you write, "just can't believe they caught you." Even the slickest homie can fall. Even you...

Sour Diesel

Man, to keep it real, I don't think I'ma stop blowing that shhh. Be having a ninja forget about all the deaths and gang shhh a ninja be going through. I don't think a lil' weed ever killed anybody. It actually helps ninjas in the street life relax and chill.

They need to make that shhh legal. My favorite kinds of weed are kush, sour diesel, real granddaddy, pain.

I know this shhh I'm writing ain't got nothing to do with the topic, but hey, look I'm in this for the chedda and the sky. Come on man, this shhh don't stop daddy

-Money Earn Vern

From The Beat: Even if we agreed that marijuana should be legal, we don't think people your age should be messing up their bodies and minds (both still developing). Not enough is known about how THC affects that development. But to be honest, we're far more concerned about the childish nonsense that this won't stop you. You've been here so many times, you should have figured out by now that the only escape is to stop doing what brings you here. We hope you realize that fact before it's too late.

Weed

I love weed 'cause that's all we smoke in the jungle — Grapes, grapes, grapes and we blow to the face Blowing these blunts day after day

No drug but still got a habit

Weed, weed gotta have it

Make a blunt disappear like magic!

-Lando

From The Beat: Well, of course you don't "gotta have it." If that were true, you wouldn't be able to survive your forced sobriety. And speaking of sobriety, why not see how long you can remain smoke-free?

Going Back To The Ranch

What it do with The Beat? This ya boy J.T. Man, I'm 'bout to go back to the Ranch. It's a bad thing, but I ain't tripping. I rather be back up there instead of being up there at Glen Mills or in YA.

But yeah, I'm 'bout to go up there and do my time and get it out the way, 'cause if I don't go up there and get my mind focus, I might get hella time and be up there for longer. So, I'm going up there to do what I have to do to get up out of there.

That's a little something on my mind this week. I'm gone.

-Jt

From The Beat: We'd like you to tell us what you "have to do" to get out of there — and, more important, what you have to do after you get out so that you don't have to take orders from strangers behind locked doors ever again!

I'm A Fool

Hot and steaming

My insides are bleedin'

No room for treatin'

'Cause it's way past due

Damn, I'm a fool

Never did I use my tool

To keep me cool

Let's call a truce

But damn, I'm still feelin' loose

-D-Boy

From The Beat: We're sorry about that last line that you wrote, but that we couldn't read, so we dropped it... As for the rest of this poem, all we can say is that you are no fool, though you may have acted foolishly in the past. Feeling sad and confused is part of what it means to grow up and try to make sense out of this messed up world. We think you're maturing in a way that will let you use your tool (your brain) to keep cool (not insane!)

My Life

Ninja, this is my life, my block in the jets

When a ninja will test you like Jazzy Jazz and Fresh

And I cook so much shhh you will think I'm a chef

I'm cookin' with the same color as Shrek

Knee deep in the game, a ninja getting paid

So I feed the block, 760 BMW with 22s, in stock

The ninja hold weight, so you better shape when you hold my rocks

And my pipe real big and it hold a lot

And you can say my flows is reckless and it's a shame

When I hop out the Lexus with squirrels on my necklace

Starting to look like cinnamon breakfast

FREE ME and the rest of the homies down.

-Ran Horn

From The Beat: If you're as knee-deep in the game as you claim, then why do you think the system will free you? Plus, even if they do, just how long do you think you'll be able to hold onto that precious gift called freedom?

My Feelings

It's my duty to set up shop
And it's my thugs that stay running the blocks
I'ma tell you like this: we gotta get this paper
Piss of DAs and the cops, they gone hate us
My game elevated to move on ninjas
One year and one month on my chest; I breathe
Neva would slit my wrist or hang from white sheets
Got too much to lose, not enough to gain
Felt good all my life, now I suffer from pain
Keep my feelin's bottled up like a fifth of Remy
My moms and brothers is the closet to me.

-Diggz

From The Beat: Even though we had to take out a couple of lines that got too close to threats, there are some clues here to who you are and what you think and feel. We agree that you have too much to lose to be thinking about ending it, but that "too much to lose" also applies to taking the risks you take that lead you here. We've seen enough to know that you can lose it all in the blink of an eye. We hope you don't!

Girls Stay Scandalous

I'm goin' to write about something different. Girls these days ain't solid. The girl will say she going to ride this out with you, but a couple months later, she flipping the script, giving you attitude and thinking she calling the shots 'cause you're stuck in here while she roaming around. Then she want to play games and say she can't ride this out with you. Girls stay scandalous.

-Nutty D

From The Beat: We have a different take on it, Nutty. We think that by giving the system power to take you away from her, you are the one that flipped the script. She SHOULD BE calling the shots for her own life, especially when you've shown her that you can't be counted on to be there with her. Why should she do what you want her to do when you can't even keep yourself free? What are we missing?

Thank You, God

Today I realized life is graceful. It's crazy how we are blessed, but instead of appreciation, we take advantage of life until on bad accident occurs. I just want to thank God for blessing me to have a normal life and starting this hour, I would like to change my life and do all I can to show my appreciation.

-Brittany

From The Beat: We wish you had written more about this subject. We love the few lines you've given us, especially your decision to change what you know you must change, "starting this hour." Next time, just choose one topic to write about so that you can give us a page of writing on it, rather than just a few lines on several different topics.

My Boo

I miss my boo
He stick to me like glue
I miss my boo
I wish we could fly to the moon
Every time I think of you I start to brake down and boo
hoo When I cry, I cry for lord knows who
Why do I cry? Maybe 'cause I miss my boo
Well, I cry because my mind if stuck on you
Why cry and let these runny tears come down my side
Maybe it's why I got all these fulfilling thoughts going through my mind
Hopefully it's the pain stuck down, down deep in my mind
My pride is hurt, my time has turned
Maybe it's my time to shine and not whine, whine, whine

-Kim

From The Beat: We hope it is your time to shine. What does "shining" mean to you? How will get from here to there? What's your plan for never coming back here again?

Shot Two Times

Hey Beat, this ya girl Banana. Today's date is July 22, '08 and this guy came to our unit and told us a story about him getting shot. Damn! That's sad. He got shot two times.

Man, I remember when I got shot two times over some dumb shhh. Well, that's all I can think of. To all, keep yo' head up and keep praying to God. Love.

-Banana

From The Beat: When you listened to Brian tell his story, did it make you want to change anything about how you live your life? So many young people in the game think that "ride or die" or the only choices. As you have seen, death is only one possibility when you're playing with guns.

A Fiend For Love

The worst drug is the one that hurts your body the most

Just like bein' away from the ones you love
But the only difference is that this jail cell where I stay today

Does not hurt you physically

But to be away from my baby girl

Is like smoking a drug that does not hurt my body

But is tearing my heart apart

Killing my soul little by little

It hurts so much

Just to know how much I love her and miss her

How much I would like to go back in time and change the past

And never have committed a crime that took me away

I wish that one day she will understand that I did not mean it

That one day she will let me be a part of her life

That is all I want

And like a dope fiend addict to crack

I had become a fiend of her love

Love to my lil' word, my everything... Lavelle

-D

From The Beat: It's so painful to think about how much you've lost for your moment of lost control! We hope you keep a record of all the "letters" and Beat contributions that focus on your love for Lavelle, so that when she's old enough to appreciate the world, you can show her how much you thought about her every day that you were away!

She!

What's up with The Beat? You know me, holding it two thumbs down, keep it "one hunnit." I got this lil' poem for my lady. It's called: "She!"

A stranger to the city

But so familiar with her ways

She even come to the 'hood

So that's why I call her babe

She down for whatever

So I keep warm like a sweater

She stay wet even though I don't sweat her

A drop from the sky is a tear from my eye

Even though I'm a thug

I still feel like a fiend

'Cause your love is like a drug

I stick to her like a slug

Feet to the ground like a lug

But not annoying like a bug

-Young Mari

From The Beat: This is yet another good reason for you to keep moving along the path you've set out for yourself — the one that moves steadily away from lock-ups and toward education, employment and family (love).

Worst Drug

The worst drug to me is sex. One day you got you a girl. She get pregnant and she have the kid. Now you gone be mad as hell if you catch her humping someone else because that's your girl.

And if it's another girl you don't know, you meet her, and she let you hump, and her ninja find out, he may he be sprung and he ready to kill you. I'm not finna lose my life over some female.

-Goku

From The Beat: All the images you use here tell us that even though you have the physical attributes of a man, you are still thinking like a little boy. One day, you'll fall for someone emotionally, and then you will move past the pre-occupation with sex that goes with your age, and you will begin to respect women.

What's Real

Yo', what's the word, Beat? You know me Same shhh different toilet, fat toilet paper Yeah man, I got all the chicks, but I'm sittin' Like some ninjas should instead of snitchin' I broke bread with you ninjas, showed you where I live Ya talking all that, but ya don't know what real is

-D

From The Beat: Maybe we don't know what real is, either. It seems to us that the real thing to think about is where you are, and how you got here, so you can avoid coming back.

Shedding Tears For Another

I can't remember the last time I shed a tear. On Sunday I dropped a few because of a lady who was older. Her story touched my soul. She has a disease that prevents her from talking. She has to type in words she has to say. That situation really help me realize how blessed I truly am.

-Brittany

From The Beat: The ability to feel another's pain is called "empathy," and it is a wonderful quality to have. It shows that you see and feel the inner-connectedness of all humanity. Yes, life is a blessing.

Bouncing Back

What's good with The Beat? You know me, same shhh different toilet.

But yeah, ninjas gone bounce back like a rubber band, you feel me. But like I say, you always gone have haters and ninjas trying to stop your shine, but that don't stop us.

-Tariq

From The Beat: You've seen how easy it is for the system to "stop your shine," so why not find a new way to shine?

That Street Drug

What's good with The Beat, man? This that ninja Mac. To me, I feel that the streets are America's worst drug because everybody gets addicted to the streets. It's like once you in this shhh, it's hard to get out because ninjas like getting that rush out of selling drugs and shooting guns. Then ninjas come to jail and say that they gone stop this and stop that, but when they get out, they do the same shhh.

-Mac

From The Beat: For too many young people, the streets are like a drug, taking them deeper and deeper. And, like all addictions, in the end they take control of your every waking (and sleeping) moment. We urge you to regain control so that you, and not the streets, are dictating your actions.

Fresno

Fresno it's so far and so different from San Francisco
But that's where I'm going, though
It's gone be a whole notha zone
So I ready to put on a show
And fake my program all the way home

-Kristin

From The Beat: We don't understand why you would commit yourself to faking your program even before you know what it is. Why not be real instead?

Tears For My Sister

The last time I cried was when my little sister died in January because her boyfriend wanna play with guns. But it's good 'cause one day we gone get to the bottom of it. But she was only 16, going to school and it's a shame she's gone. 1991-2008, GIP Tanika.

-Lee Boy

From The Beat: We are so sorry for your loss. We wish guns were not so easy to get because we know that too often, they get misused or end in accidents that should never have happened.

A Time To Play...

What's up with The Beat? Man, fightin' this 707. But I'm cool man. Ninja be playin' up in here. But there is a time to play and there is a time not to play.

Man, I had two fights up in here, but I'm cool now. When I get out, I'll stop messing up and get a job and go back to school.

Man, I know I'm in the beef, though. I love all my ninjas and I will die for my ninjas. I don't give a damn. And I love my family too.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It sounds to us like you haven't really made the choices you need to make because you're still down for your ninjas but you also say you're going to stop messing up. Sometimes, being an adult means having to choose between two things you like, because you can't have both. You're at that point in your life now. All we can do is strongly encourage you to follow the promise of school and work, and forget about dying for your ninjas. Better to live for them!

Shot In The Hand

One day I was walking home from school and I seen some girls that I can't stand, and they don't like me. They keep calling my house saying they was going to kill me. But she shot me in the hand and knee. Well, that's all I want to talk about 'cause it's going to make me cry.

-Banana

From The Beat: Do you know how lucky you are to be alive and still able to get around? What happened to the shooter? Tragic stories like this (and much worse ones) are inevitable when children play with guns!

Almost Home

What's up, Beat? This is yo' boy, Enano, waiting for that day to touch down. This is my last time writing to The Beat. To all doing time, yo' day will come. I did my time, now it's time to go get back what this system took from me, my freedom.

This is yo' boy, Enano, and I'll see y'all. I'll be doing my thang. See y'all later. It's been a long journey with The Beat. I'm out.

-Enano

From The Beat: Hold up, if you're headed straight back to the block, what has your time in juvy and at the Ranch taught you? Will you be right back down in there? Why isn't your freedom more precious than any drama or money the streets may offer you?

The Worst Drug

What's good Beat? Me, ready to get out of this thang for real, you feel me? But to me, the worst drug is the streets, for real! The streets is way more addictive than any drug you can think of! Once you take a hit of them streets, it's a wrap!

Once you touch that pistol or yo' name start to ring bells in the 'hood or section, you a goner, baby! But until you see me in the streets, I'm gone keep it rocking.

-Anto

From The Beat: We don't think that everybody who gets a taste of the streets' "thrills" is instantly addicted. Some young people can instantly see where that addiction leads, and stay away. But even if you are addicted, you can break that addiction, just the same way a crack-head or cigarette smoker can break their addictions — by wanting to stop, seeking the help of others who have stopped, and taking each day of "street separation" as one more day of sobriety. And, of all these, the hardest is the first: wanting not to be addicted.

One Hundred Percent Real

What's good with this Beat thang? I'm chillin', ya heard me? Countin' down this playtime so I can get back to my business, but shhh really messed up out there. RIP To the homies

Mos' ninjas ain't real, mos' ninjas is fake. A real ninja take a murder, do the time, an' don't break a snitch. Ninja hit the feds and tell stories by daybreak, now that's some real ass shhh that a ninja just can't take, but you can take 'em out the game. But, ninja, don't get caught, 'cause once they get a ninja' hands, ya freedom can't be bought.

When I'm fresh out, I still bang on the block, jus' me an' my boys. Shhh, I love my ninjas. We been bought them dollars. We look grimy in all black, just like them Impalas, but I'm a real ass ninja, ya heard me?

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: Uh, no. A real ninja takes care of his family, has the strength to go it alone, respects the value of human life, and dares to have a dream that will make him a credit to his people. You are too smart to believe that killing, robbing, and serving time are what make you a man.

Thuggin'

What's good with The Beat? You know me, thuggin' this program out. They can't keep the homie forever, 'cause you know I stay true to the game. I don't feel ninjas that get locked up and try to switch they whole lifestyle. Yo' can't take gangsta from a ninja while he doin', you just gotta be able to sav it out. If you do the crime, you have to do the time, and time ain't gone change me. One love.

-Tre-O

From The Beat: Do you mean you don't feel incarcerated ninjas really ever stop gangbanging because they don't have the strength or heart to change, or that you can't respect anyone who drops out of the street life and tries to develop a life beyond the block? Why are you so dedicated to your gangsta life? What, specifically, does it bring you? What else could you do to replace the drama, the money, the rep you may have in the streets, that could show you and the world that you're capable of your own inspirations, development of your talents, and personal success?

Thuggin'

To me, thuggin is the worst drug because it kills more young people than anything in the U.S. For some reason, we as young men feel that this beef shhh is the best thing for us. I don't know why, but we thuggin'.

-Skindo

From The Beat: Tragically, what you've written about how many young people get killed on these mean streets is too true. The leading cause of death for young black men (ages 14-24) is murder! Why do you think this is true?

A Drug Called Fear

I ain't really feelin' any of these topics, but I'm gone tell y'all 'bout this drug called fear. I see these ninjas in here overdosing on every day of the week. I see it in these ninja's eyes. Every one of them weak except the ones I roll with 'cause they been through shhh like this since four feet waist-deep in the game, getting deeper and deeper.

No more tears in my eyes 'cause they filled with lava, neva spooked. I am fearless. If you ever hear another ninja saying this, he just hollering. He shook.

-E-Boy

From The Beat: You know, E-Boy, we're not really interested in your evaluation of others in your same situation. The only person you can accurately describe is yourself, because you know what lies under the surface. This piece does nothing but describe the surface of others. Tell us more about you and less about them. We think you're doing a degree of fronting by declaring yourself to be free of fear. Fear is an instinct, built into the animal that all of us are. Maybe what you're afraid of is to admit you have fear, like every other human being on earth...

Hot Boy

What's good with The Beat, man? It's ya boy G-Baby. You know, the hottest ninja in America. Who hotter than me? Ya feel me?

When I get out, I'm go burn this city, flip this nasty place inside out, ya heard. And you can't blame me if I set this grimy place on fire, 'cause mommy always told me I was crazy.

-G-Baby

From The Beat: Your mama may be right about you being crazy, but that doesn't mean we can't blame you if you turn the city into a conflagration. Everything we do in this world has consequences — and blame is just one of them.

Antwanisha

What's up with The Beat? This be yo' boy, C, ya dig? Comin' straight from my 'hood. But, feel me? I wanna talk about my cousin, Antwanisha. I miss her dearly and I would do anything to make her come back. But whoever did that, they took my folk's life.

-C

From The Beat: You totally have our hearts from us here at The Beat Within, for your cousin, Antwanisha's death. RIP.

Regrets

What good with The Beat? It's ya boy, Yung Chink, holdin' it down at the Ranch, but today's assignment I'm gonna talk about is "My Regrets."

There's a lot of things that I don't regret. For example, when I commit a crime, my victim can get very hurt. I don't regret it because I know what I did before I did it, so I don't really feel bad. My regrets are limited. The only thing that I truly regret is hurting my family, especially my mom.

Every time I see her, I regret that I ever did anything to hurt her. It makes me feel bad, knowing that I can't give her feelings back. The only thing I can do is replace it with my positive actions and achievements that I accomplished.

Well, Beat, the only regrets I have is hurting my family. Until we meet again, ya boy, Chink, is going to hold it down.

-Yung Chink

From The Beat: Your mom hurts because she knows that deep down, you are a good person. She knows the innocence you used to hold inside you, and she fears for your future and the future of your family. Tell us more about the positive actions and achievements you plan to accomplish.

My Son

What up Beat, it's the homeboy Droops back again. I just had my son, and he's five months now. I just don't wanna miss out on his life.

I need to get my shhh together, step my game up and stay out of the system. Well Beat, I got to go.

-Droopy

From The Beat: Being a father is a huge responsibility, and your son will need you to be a strong, loving, and even more, a present figure in his life. Use this as motivation to make the changes you need to make in your life to get out and stay out—if not for your sake, for the sake of your baby boy.

Taking Risks

I feel that a risk is all dependent on perception. If you feel you're taking a risk then you are, but if you feel you're not then you must have some stability or something to fall back on. So a risk is what each person feels he can lose or what he's willing to win. Risk is a chance to win or a time to lose.

-Risky Writer

From The Beat: How can you decide whether or not it's worth it to take a risk? Have you taken any risks in the past that paid off? Or any that you shouldn't have taken? Keep exploring this topic, we'd like to hear more.

Risky Age

Q-vote Beat and Beaters? What's going on. Well, I have a big risk: being locked up, because I am 18 years old, and if I get into a fight, I will be going to county jail. So it's a big risk, alrato.

-Fg

From The Beat: As you get older, the stakes rise. What caused you to get into fights before? How can you make sure you don't get sucked in to the same thing? Stay out of trouble.

My Foolish Selfish Risk

Let's go, to freshmen's hand, everything I do is a risk being in here. Me on the outs, I did some stupid shhh. I saw a fool at a school with hella money and I hit the fool and cashed in but like a dumb person, I did it in class. I knew I was going to get in trouble, but I didn't care. I was hella high, drunk everything else. Late, Beaters.

-Freshmen

From The Beat: You're right, that was a dumb move. Was it worth it? Learn from this experience. It's not smart to get drunk and high at school, especially if you know from experience that this can make you do reckless, bad things. Also, leave your hands to yourself!

My' Sis The Jewel

I really don't have family, it's only my sister and my brothers.

Well, my sis is about 31 now and she's one of the best women alive. She was 21 taking care of me and my brothers and two of her own. She did everything and more. I learned how to take care of myself and do what I have to do. She's my idol and I love her a lot, she does a lot for me and when I have the chance I'll pay her back with all the love I can.

That's all I got to say love your family, and take care for now. I'm out and will be out next week.

-Cyclops

From The Beat: Your sister sounds like an amazing, very capable person. It is very hard to take care of so many children like that, no wonder she's your idol. What can you do when you get out to show your appreciation or help pay her back? The first step may be showing her this writing! We're sure she'd love to see it.

It Sucks

Q-vo Beat? What's good gente (people)? Me, just chilling in my cell thinking about the ladies I could have met on the outs. It really sucks to be locked up in this solitary place.

- Rolando

From The Beat: Sounds like you're missing having girls in your life! What is it that you miss the most? Is there anyone back home you can write to? Do you have a plan upon getting out so you don't return?

Hardly Cry

I can't remember the last time I cried, it's weird how much time I spent without doing it once. It's amazing how someone like me doesn't share those feelings except for when I want too.

Maybe it's because I make those who love me cry.

I spent my time doing drugs, like weed. When it comes to weed I never have a straight mind. I also do crystal meth, that one thing that screws you up and in a bad way. I always feel worse after. Another drug that I use is cocaine and alcohol together. That's when I start to get myself into trouble.

Most of the crap I end up picking up because of my friends. My friends make it look cool, so I thought it would make me cool. But you know what, screw those freaking drugs. I don't need that in my life, like ecstasy. I tried it because I thought it would solve my problems but it really doesn't.

I have some problems like I yell at my mom and I start breaking stuff and try to hurt my 26 year old brother for no reason, a lot of it for no reason. I know I feel hella wrong and regret it. I know it's bad, that's why I'm trying to change. I'm going to change for my family.

-P

From The Beat: You're right, none of those drugs will solve your problems. It seems that you've been going through some rough times in life and with your family, and you're right, the temporary high of drugs is not a solution. It is important to realize that continued usage will probably just make things worse. We are happy that you have decided that you don't need these drugs in your life, but how are you going to make sure then when you get back to your friends, they don't pressure you into taking them again?

The Worst Drug

I think the worst drug is Crystal Meth. I think it's the worst because I see how it affects people's health. People that do Crystal Meth mess up their hormones. It makes people look older than they really are. People that do it are really not there. It really messes up their life and people would start looking at you different. Also people look stressed out on it.

-Chico

From The Beat: As we've commented elsewhere, we know that meth is one of the worst drugs around. It destroys the brain and demands to be "fed" ever-greater amounts. People on meth will lie for their fix, steal from their families, and do degrading things to themselves that they would never think about doing without that drug. We want to recommend a book called "Beautiful Child" about a boy who gets hooked, written by his father. It made us cry to read what they both have had to experience due to the addiction.

Ten Years Old I Cried

I was 10 years old when it was the last time I cried because I got in trouble at school. When I got home I got spank by my mom. And that was the last time I cry.

-Freddy

From The Beat: What made you come to the conclusion that you wouldn't cry for a long time and when you did have your moments of heartbreak what was it that made you cry?

Should Of Went To Court

The bad thing about being in here is that you can't see your family or friends in here. It also sucks 'cause you can't see your lady.

On July 8, 2008 that's when I got busted. I was with my lady and two home girls and we were at San Jose State University at 1:00 am. We were waiting for some more friends of ours. My lady, my self and our two home girls were sitting on a bench behind all kinds of bushes.

All of a sudden my home girl sees cops so we started walking toward them and one of my home girls jumped in a bush to hide. The cop tells my lady, myself and my home girl to sit down. So we did, they asked my lady what her name was- he ran her name through and she was clear.

They asked my home girl what her name was and she also came out clear.

So the cop finally asked me my name I gave it to him he ran it through. Next he told me to stand up he told me put my hands behind my back. He said I was being arrested for a warrant. I looked at my lady and she started crying, that made me feel bad, I kept thinking to myself I should have went to court.

So the whole time I've been in here. I was thinking this is my last time in here. Now I have court soon. I'm wishing I get out.

-Jose

From The Beat: Yeah, sometimes it don't pay trying to beat around the bush, sometimes it's best to stay ahead of the game and that's by never giving the system an excuse to take you away from those you love and that what is important to you doing the days.

Great Grandfather

I'm going to talk about the oldest person in family. The oldest person in my family is my great grandfather. He means a lot to me. He's been there through some good and some bad times during my life. I've learned many things from him.

The most important thing that I've learned from him was being a hard worker. I've also learned to be respectful towards my elders from him. My role in my family is to support my family in the future.

-Tazz

From The Beat: Your great grandfather has taught you some extremely valuable lessons, and it sounds like you are very lucky to have him as a role model in your life. How can you take these lessons and apply them to your life right now? What about him do you admire most?

The Last Time I Cried Was Here

Last time I cried I was in here and my mom came to visit me and she told me that my little brother miss me and that the cops came to the house and got my brother Peter and she told me that the cops were going to try to get my family away from me and I cried because my aunt came to visit her son and she gave me a hug. But now I'm going to go to the ranch.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We hope that everything turns out to be fine for you and your family Kevin. Our piece of advice is just to stay strong and never let anyone take you away from your family. Do the right thing and make life easier for you and your family.

Hey Beat

Well beat I just want to say what's up and that I'm doing good just waiting to get out.

-Gato

From The Beat: Thanks for giving us a shout out hope to hear from you soon.

The Day I Get Released

The day I get released will be the best day ever! The day I get released I will have to stop by Taco Bell, Jack-in-the-Box, In And Out, Chili's, McDonalds, Burger Kind, KFC, Denny's, Starbucks, Jamba Juice, Panda Express, Subway, Togo's, Round Table, Pizza Hut, and 7-11 for a slushy.

After I stop by all those places and pick up all the food, I will then go home to my house and hang out with my family and then after a while go get a haircut and a new cell phone and then go home and just kick back! Hopefully I get released soon.

-Dj Stylez

From the Beat: Sounds like you have it all planned out! What's the first thing you're going to do with your family? What makes you the most excited? While you're in the halls, work hard to make sure you can get out as soon as possible.

RIP Uncle Manuel

The last time I cried was because my mother told me that my favorite uncle got killed by some gang member. But my uncle, he wasn't a gang member. He was normal person with a good job with his own apartment. He was young. He was about to be 23 on July 22 when, three days before, he got shot in the chest three times.

His dreams was to put me on his job so we could work together and live together because he was living alone by himself. but que descancé en paz tio (RIP Uncle) Manuel Hernandez Zeron 7/22/86 - 7/20/08.

-Martin

From The Beat: We are so sorry for your loss. Once bullets fly out of gun barrels, they have no respect for who or what they hit. Innocent babies get killed in their beds or playing outside, so we're not surprised that your uncle was killed by gang fire even though he wasn't a gangster. We hope you find a way to get yourself out of this life so that you can honor your uncle's memory by doing the things he hoped you would do, and not the things he wanted you to stop doing.

I Am The Family Jewel

Q-vote Beat and Beaters. What's going on. The family jewel in my family is me because my mother says I'm the man of the house.

I have an older carnal, but he already has his own family. So I'm the one left to look after my familia.

-Fg

From The Beat: Be that man of the house then. What are you waiting for? That's a lot of responsibility! How do you take care of your family? What are they doing now that you're locked up? If your family relies on you like that, it's very important to be there for them, so work hard to get out of the halls and live up to your role as the man of the house.

Not Like My Father

Q-vote Beat! It's this youngster back again to write on this topic. Being a fool or a father... well unlike my father, I'm gonna be there for my kids and give them anything and everything they need no matter what or how I have to get it.

That's how I would do it for my kids no matter what, unlike my father. He has been in jail for many years and he still has two more, but just because he hasn't been in my life, that doesn't stop me from doing what I gotta do and get what I gotta get for me and my future family.

Well this is it for now, to all, take care.

-Stomper

From The Beat: What do you want for your future family? We're sorry that your father was never there for you, but it is good that you are using your experience with him to make sure you don't make the same mistakes in the future. It is extremely important to put your family first and make sure you are a good presence in their life. How are you going to make sure that you can be the best dad you can be?

Shed a Tear

Since I've been incarcerated I have cried a few times. During visits I've shed tears, and writing/receiving letters I've shed tears. Normally, men try to deny the fact. They hide behind a shield of masculinity so as not to be deemed weak.

Personally, I don't really care. I see tears and sadness as just another emotion such as happiness, fear, or anger. And holding them inside will only store them for a later date. So I say screw it...cry now, laugh later.

-B Ant

From The Beat: It may sound cliché, but there is a lot of truth in the saying, "it's okay to cry." Crying is a human reaction that springs up in all people (like you said, regardless of sex). It's good that you are comfortable enough with yourself to accept your feelings as they come so you don't just bottle them up, which can be frustrating, unhealthy, or cause someone to lash out in different ways. Why do you think some people are so preoccupied with holding up their "shield of masculinity?"

The Money

The devil says do whatever
Screw the world
Screw the world
Rebel against the government
The cavemen have it better than us!
I wish I was born in the 1980s...
Forget what the people say
Money does buy happiness
If only Jesus was still alive!

-Chucks

From The Beat: There are so many different messages in this poem... If money buys happiness (and we think it helps), then why do you wish Jesus was still alive? What would be different in the world if He was? What would be different in your life? Why do you wish you were born in the '80s?

A Tree Behind Walls

What up Beat? Well today I went to my fitness court, and still nothing. That DA talking about me like if she knows me, assuming that I'm a cold-blooded killer. That fat-ass don't know me coming to the court with an ice cooler full of food. How can she live with her fat-ass self? The punk-ass DA trying to take me out the game. I don't fall, I stand tall and solid, like the palm trees.

-H-Man

From The Beat: The DA's job is to prosecute you for the crime they say you committed. You can call her names if you want, but in the end, she has power over your future — and you are the one that gave her that power! So maybe you should turn some of that bad-mouth criticism on yourself. Only you can take yourself out of the game, if you choose. And if you don't, the DA can't take you out of the game—only out of the world.

The Last Time I Cried

Well the last time I cried was when I found out the homeboy died. It was a trip because you hear about people dying and you think to yourself that's all bad, but when it happens to someone you care about it's a whole different level of sadness, you just want to strap on the war boots and go to war with the people who did it.

The thing is, what goes around comes around ten times harder. They started a war they can't win. Well I'm go cut it here. Much love, in loving memory of the homeboy Wolfey.

-Loss My Friend

From The Beat: We are so sorry for the loss of your friend. But remember, engaging in a war for revenge will probably only result in more pain and death. It is infuriating and terribly tragic when a friend gets killed, but don't let yourself be blinded by vengeance.

Time Is Valuable

My world is falling, I didn't think it could ever happen this way. What happened? As I go back and think about things, it hurts to go realize everything is not true, how I once said it was.

My parents said, "believe in the law, for your uncles wears the badge."

But one late night, it was a corrupt day. They came for one and took two, not 'till after they beat me and had me on my knees, did they check for my tattoo on my arms.

When they realized I didn't have one, they knew a mistake was made. Me and my brother are missed deeply for charges we didn't do. Time is valuable.

-Fernando

From The Beat: Yes, time is valuable, and everything can change in a split second. Your parents weren't entirely wrong when they told you to believe in the law. You have to understand that this will always happen when being in the wrong turf with the wrong people. You will always expect that and more. We hope the truth comes to light.

Meth, Crack And Heroin

I've tried a few drugs. Weed, coke, thizz... but the ones to make sure to never test are meth, crack, and heroin. I'm sure there will be more to never test but I've seen these take a toll on society. I'm afraid that if I do try them, I won't stop. Not only that, but they turn people into knocks and I'm no knock. I'm not willing to give my life away to a high I don't plan on using my knock drugs, but a blunt or two will probably be in my schedule still.

-Disuey

From the Beat: It can be so hard to walk a straight path for some individuals, so we know a good deed has been done when a person has actually changed their life for the better. We do hope you can eventually put the blunt down too and all the problems that bring you to places like this. Work on bettering you and staying free!

Addictive

I personally think all drugs are/can be addicting and some drugs are just stronger and more addicting than others. I've seen a member of my family go in and out of prison because of drug addiction but is now trying to get his life right. He says it's hard to stop doing drugs after all those years, so my opinion is just to stay away from drug for the people who haven't tried it, but for those who have and want to stop I'd request drug counseling or drug rehab until you feel that it has really helped you.

-Victor

From The Beat: We appreciate you putting that word of advice out there and letting those who don't know what time it is when it comes to drugs and the effects it is having on neighborhoods across America. We hope you stay putting that word of advice out there because every voice counts.

Baby Boy

The last time I cried well to tell you the truth, I'm not going to lie, I cried when my girl was born, that was the happiest day off my life, you know? But yeah that had to be the time I cried, and now I'm up in the hall doing my time, you know?

I love you so much! I'm going to be there for you, I'm not going to be a dad that's not here for you. I'm always going to be there for you baby. Your dad isn't there now, but he still love you.

-Baby Boy

From the Beat: If you true to your words about being there for your daughter, that all starts from the time you are released and making sure you're doing all what's necessary to make sure she grows up with a bright future. Don't fail her again by allowing jail to be part of your life.

My Begging of Life

Born in '92, growin' up without a father, mama left me for some drugs, selling her body just for profit.

Where were you when you were needed most? Sister crying while my mom's strung out on dope, little boy being abused, soon to find himself all alone on a curb, about to be sent to a foster home, 6 years old. When I seen his face the first time in my whole life, thinking my feelings for him was about to change.

But hell nah, I'm my own father. Life is getting harder everyday while the world turns colder. Now I'm 16, sister 17, mama's still a fiend no contact or visits for my father doing years.

Life sucks at times, but I keep my head held high, let my actions do the saying and the smoke will rise.

-Crazy L

From The Beat: Are you writing from your own life experience? If so, we are sorry for the things you've witnessed and experienced. Now, you have to understand that just because your parents were not there for you, it doesn't mean that you are going to throw away your life in jail or in drugs. Be man, the father and mother you and your sister never had. Use your experience to motivate you be someone different than what they are. You're almost an adult, so you should think and act like an adult. Don't repeat the same story.

Not A Good Father

From my own experience I feel like I do relate to this topic a lot. The reason why I feel this way is because every time I get locked up, I'm being away from my son.

So I'm not being the right father figure I'm suppose to be. I'm missing out his life by not getting locked up. But the streets keep calling me.

-Sk

From The Beat: What's more important for you, the streets or your son?

Horse

Well to me the worst drug is heroin. Why I think it is, is because once you use it you're pretty much hooked. Not only addicted mentally but physically. Once you start and try to stop your body breaks down from the withdrawal and you vomit and all other sorts of things.

I mean it's so bad they actually give syringes out at hospitals so people won't catch HIV I mean that's my thoughts on it I'm out Beat alrato.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: There's no question heroin is dangerous. It starts to make you lose perspective and your mind and everything else in your life, and it makes you a slave to it.

A Fool Or a Father

Hey Beat! What's crackin! Well what I think is that you could be any age and not know if you're going to be a good father.

My teacher told me that he was 32 years old and he told us straight up, "I'm scared, I've never had a kid before, and I don't know if I'm ready." I think having a kid is a big responsibility. I believe in the saying "don't go having a kid if you can't even wipe your ass."

I would probably want to have a kid until I'm 24-27 years old. I would step up and take care of my kid if I had one right now. I would take care of it. Well that's all Beat.

- Victor

From The Beat: Smart thinking! Why having a kid when you can even take care of yourself? That's a good saying. Always keep in mind. Now let's talk about your situation which is more important right now. What are your plans upon getting out of here? Your future? It's really important to think about this ahead of time.

My World

No more trieste moments, no more times to cry my heart turned stone you can see it in my eyes going to sleep at night thinking about this gangsta lullaby, another day to get by in this life I just let out a sigh, I ain't ready to die but yet again I am, all day I hear the laughing of this devil in my head, it causes me stress but I bet that I'll never get enough, 'cause the cause that I'm fighting for is leaving me tough with love, so I stand above my oppressors and watch my enemies living life, saying "I'd rather die on my feet than to live on my knees," so now you see, that the sun never goes down on my hood, the nights fall may set but the homies still up to no good if I don't got the right to live my life, than who the hell should, I put my chin held high and yell out "I could" 'cause I would if I could and I'm not just sayin' it, 'cause I'm playing with my life but the system's the one that's hangin' it, these the rhymes that I spit droppin' lines, what a hit, leavin this shhh I'm goin' dip dip dip!

-Smiley

From The Beat: You give us a great picture of your world. It's easy to get drawn into this idea that being a man is about not serving anyone. But helping others doesn't make you a servant, it gives you power. It puts a part of you in them and brings them closer to you. So don't serve the devil in your head, give others reason to love you.

Abandoned Father

There are some fathers that abandon the children, but for me, my father abandoned me in a different way. He didn't try to do it on purpose, but it just happened.

He was shot when I was very young. It was all for some girl. The girl was still talking to her ex-man, he got in a fight with some guy (ex-boyfriend) because he was harassing my fathers, and his girl. My father knocked him, the guy was so mad and came back and murdered my father. So in my life, my father was both a fool and a father, a fool for fighting for some bz, but a father for supporting his kids.

-A son

From The Beat: We are sorry about your loss. Sadly things didn't go well for you with your father. Things happens! Can what happened to him be a lesson for you or others? What can be the lesson learned?

My Steps To Being a Father

What's up Beat? This is Jr. coming from this unit! Well what I'm going to talk about is what are my step to become a father. Plus I'm about to be a father.

Step one, I'm about get out of this jail. Step two, I'm to look for a job because I know I have to buy food and clothes for the baby. Step three, finish high school, because I also need my education.

The last step is to not leave my kid, I know I will accomplish that because I will care for my kid and I don't want my kid to grow up without a father.

I want to be there for my kid all his life. So to all you people that are going to be a father, fortunately I know good fathers that are my role models.

-Jr

From The Beat: You got it all planned out! This is a good sign that you may accomplish positive things that will help you fix your life. Having a kid is having a lot of responsibilities. So when you get out, keep your own words in mind always. He needs you, a father.

Dedicated To The One I Love

I knew you'd be mine as soon as we met,
you promised loyalty to me and a set
call me Romeo I'll call you Juliet
I ain't met another like you yet
no matter how thick my bullshhh gets
you're always close to me like you're supposed to be
ready to make that do for me
I'm hoping we can outrun the past
and enjoy our love at last,
but trouble's on our ass
and it's coming pretty fast
so I hope you down for another ride,
and if we don't make it,
I'll see you on the other side.

-Lonely Boy

From The Beat: It's great that you two have such closeness and that you want to be together beyond anything else, but you can't spend your whole life running. Part of being there for someone is being stable, and as hard as that is, it shows what you'll do for your Juliet.

The Risk

All my life, I have been on the edge. I always lived my life to the fullest and sometimes to the highest, doing drugs and what not to the point that I was always stressing off bullshhh and the times I get mad at anyone, you would see the devil come out of me until, at one point, I was at the edge of thinking to overdose on meth and die.

The things drugs do to you. I was doing too much to the point that things keep getting worst all I wanted to do is die, but I realized that I got people that love me and I can still live life and when things got bad, that's why I ended up here, locked up but I'm realizing that the drug screwed me up and the people that care are suffering and hurting cause of the stupid things I did and all I want to do is cry.

-Jackie

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing the truth about why you were getting so caught up in drugs. It is often really difficult for people to express the things you wrote in this one piece, so it seems like you are ready to make a change. So, cry and then heal.

Crime Is The Worst Drug

I think the worst drug is crime, I say this because I smoke weed and it's coo'. I feel relaxed and I really enjoy myself, and so do the other homeboys when we're lit.

The crystal is not something I mess around with, but the homies that do seem to handle themselves. Some people get all crazy though, So I don't mess with them either.

Ecstasy is the shhh! But back on crime, crime is addicting. Everybody loves to commit crimes like steal cars, rush rivals and leave them bloody. Or steal for money and keep doing it. So that's what keeps getting us locked up.

And I know, "doing drugs is a crime," but none of us care. For the most part, but what I'm saying is the rush of doing a crime gets to you. I like getting free money or getting free liquor. You can even get free weed if you find the right person. And I know "that's someone's family member," who cares. Save it. The best things in life are free if you make it that way. I'm out Beat. Stay up.

-Shabbs

From The Beat: There's no denying that the easy way is attractive, and that there is an addictive rush in crime. But don't let it take control of you. Because if the best things in life are free, what does the heavy price you pay (your freedom) say about all that?

I Hate Drugs

Personally I don't care if you do drugs.
Tell you I do drugs, I'm not tripping.
It's a way of life, to express yourself to experiment.
I smoke weed and drink.
But I can't deny there's days when I pop thizz pills,
or snort yayo and chewy it up.
But the worst drug is crystal meth.
I don't like that stuff, I hate it.
Never tried it. I lost my family, my homies, even my dog.
I used to sell the stuff, but I regret it.
You do know the stuff could be made with stuff from the store.
I'm just saying crystal meth is wack like crack.

-Will

From The Beat: Drugs don't really allow you to express yourself or to experiment. They just fill you with the illusion that you're doing those things. But as soon as you wake up you realize that you're just playing with smoke and shadows and that any real creativity disappears in that game.

Meth

I think the worst drug is meth, because when you try meth it pulls you to want more because you feel so good when you are using it but later you will start changing little by little without you even knowing you will start fighting with your family every day you will go looking for meth and you will do anything for it and it would get you to steal from your own family.

-Psycho

From The Beat: One of the things that makes drugs so dangerous is that you start to forget things and people outside yourself. It's scary sometimes what that can make you do.

Stressed Out

I'm stressed out my mind,
I've been here for a long time,
I feel ashamed,
can't watch my little brother's football games,
hopefully I get what I'm shooting for,
until then another day behind these locked doors.

-A big brother

From The Beat: There's little you can do in here, except prepare yourself for when you get out. Prepare yourself so that you'll never have to stay locked up again, and lose out on all of what's going on outside.

Drugs

I live in a life full of drugs
criminals, gangsters, and a bunch of thugs.
Smoke a blunt when I'm feeling down
or just to chill and hang around.
Where I'm from you can find anything you're looking for
Just take a trip down to the local liquor store.
You'll find meth. Pills, trees and cake
those goddamn drugs will leave you broke.
stuck.
fiending for more.
To me drugs are not needed but wanted
usually leaving me cold hearted
I do stupid things while I'm on one
others think I'm an idiot,
to me it's just having some fun.

-Lil' R

From The Beat: You point out exactly the problem. Even if you just try to have fun and get caught up in the good times, it really does change things. You do end up broke and stuck, and you may not even care. But that doesn't mean the people that love you don't care.

The Relationship with my Mom

My relationship with my mom has been very rocky and unstable. To me, my relationship with my family should be number one.

Lately, it has been put in second place, and I am learning the hard way to get the trust and bond back with them. I put them last and my "so called" boyfriend first and it is because I did that, I am doing time. I swore I'd give my everything to him and I only known him for 6-10 months.

So many plans and promises were broken. I had a sweater I got from Mexico where my man was from and my mom didn't want me to be with him. I didn't listen and went with him anyway! She tried to take the sweater from me and I said "no," putting him first and not thinking of my mom. I hit her the first day I was in here. I didn't care if my family wanted me home or if my mom was hurt.

I called him to give me his address so I can write him letters. When I asked him to give me the address, he was very hesitant but did it anyway. He swore up and down he would write me. Well two weeks later, no letter. In the long run, I lost and I have to go through this by myself. I pushed the most important people away so please people, take my advice: Don't put anyone first other than your family.

- Queen

From the Beat: Thank you for sharing that lesson. It is definitely not wise to ditch your family in favor of someone you've known for only a few months.

Fathers Are Fools

I really think fathers are fools because I grew up with my older brother, partly but I grew up mostly on my own. I love the knowledge I have today I want a family.

My dad really wasn't there and my mother wasn't there either. I was doing all the wrong things in life. I really want to start a family. I just want a girl to share it with. I want children to share my knowledge with. I want the family I never had and I hope God can give that to me.

-Shine

From The Beat: You don't have to wait for God, maybe you can work towards becoming responsible and starting a family when you are ready to take care of them.

The Worst Drug or The Worst You!

I think the worst drug doesn't really exist. I think that if you believe you're addicted to a drug then you are. And, if you are addicted and you say you don't believe it, you are wrong because subconsciously you must believe you are. Your reality is what you believe and what you think

-Eddie

From The Beat: You make a good point about how the mind is powerful and plays a big role in determining a person's reality.

The Worst Drug

The worst drug is drugs, what the... of course there is no real worst drug, they're all bad, that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. Why don't you go slap yourself in the face. Why you gonna ask me such a dumb question. Thank You!

-Your Face

From The Beat: We encourage you to flip through The Beat and read some of the insightful, meaningful, and personal things that other people wrote from this "dumb" prompt.

A Fool or a Father

I know for me I've had a hard time with my dad for the fact is that he wanted and trained me to be second generation in the streets.

My dad was raised to not cry and never give up till you're on top. It's been especially hard because I am the daughter of a man from the Mission. I always have had to live up to my dad's reputation of holding out and being tough.

I turned 18 two weeks ago and he didn't even want to come and see me locked up for my birthday and won't even talk to me.

I want to be a mom that my kids feel comfortable talking to about anything. I want to be the mom they feel safe with.

I'm going to Mariposa in the next week or two and I know that its gonna be hard but I need to do it cause I don't want to be a mom on probation or on parole raising my kids.

-Luv

From The Beat: Why won't he talk to you and come see you? It seems like letting go of your father's reputation and working on the future of your family is the right way to go.

Crying

It's Frank the Tank once again, just chilling.

The topic is the last time I cried. I really can't remember, either because it was a long time ago or I was just too drunk to remember. It could have been tears of happiness or sadness, I don't know. But I don't think there's anything wrong with crying. If I cry, I cry, but there's going to be a reason for my crying. I'm man enough to cry and gangster enough to kill. I'm gonna leave it at that. Alrato.

-Frank the Tank

From the Beat: It's good that you're comfortable with crying, but it sounds like you're still trying to prove yourself here. Being gangster enough to kill is not a good thing.

My Hynas

What's good Beat and Beat readers!

Well one of the topics I came up was about the hynas. Well I've been here and there, left and right with them hynas, I cant live without them, I'm going crazy in here without hynas, I can't wait till I go to the ranch for when I get me OT's so I can go see my ladies. Well that's it until next time. Alrato.

-Chicano

From The Beat: What is it about girls that you miss the most? Are there any specific girls who've had a big impact on your life? We'd like to hear more about these girls who you need so much!

Father

My father is from San Jose and he never comes around. He's never come to just visit - he only comes to get money and push us around, only long enough to get my mom pregnant and to make promises.

I have learned the hard way to put my dad in a different category and not to pay any attention to what he needs to say cause I know that way deep beyond the selfishness, alcohol, drugs and all the rejection in his life, there must be somewhere in him that he wants to life different and maybe years from now, he will say "I love you mi hija."

-Destiny

From The Beat: We hope with all our heart that you will hear this one day.

No Chance

I was so blind you broke my heart
 I was young and I didn't know what to do
 No one can help me not even my crew
 So girl tell me if our love is true
 Its time for me to say bye-bye
 You need to apologize
 You never knew how much I love
 You girl
 You ever gave me no chance
 You always told me lies
 Now I realized you never
 Gave me no chance
 You never gave me no chance
 You never gave me no chance
 You never knew how much I
 Love you girl
 You always told me lies
 I was so blind
 You broke my Heart
 I was

-Ju Ju

From The Beat: Thank you for the original love songs. If you keep this up, maybe you'll have enough songs for a whole album!

My Future

Damn, I just got locked up weeks ago. For the last two weeks I've been thinking about what I'm gonna do when I get out. I don't have a home to go to anymore, since my dad got evicted and I'm now 18. I got tattoos going up and down my arms. When I get out I wanna go to college and get a job, but I've never had a job.

My whole life I've relied on selling drugs and robbing people to get by. I don't know where my dad is moving to, but I want to stay where I'm at even though it's a gang neighborhood, all I know is there. Hopefully when I get out my lady will still be waiting for me and I can find a place to live.

-Reaper

From The Beat: Don't be afraid of change. Even though all you know is this one gang neighborhood, you shouldn't let that stop you from seeking out change if you think that would be the best thing to do. Getting your life together after being locked up is a really daunting task. Even though you've never had a job before, it would be a good idea to go for it and get some job experience under your belt so that you don't have to support yourself by doing the same old things that will probably get you in trouble again.

Teen Dads

Why are there teen dads that don't step up?
 First off, when I say they don't step up
 It means that you can love your child
 But are you there
 When he or she is sick or when they take their first step
 Or, when they want attention?
 Also, say you love your child
 But when you come home
 You spend two hours and then leave
 Or, maybe you're at home
 But don't seem to pay attention to him or her
 Because if you do love them
 Then why are you in jail?
 Aren't you trying to change?
 Teen dads, if you love your kids
 Step up and change your life

-Carl

From The Beat: You say it all. We'll let the teen dads respond.

Me And You

I promise to you babe my feelings are staying this way
 Never want to hurt you
 Never want to leave you alone
 every time I'm by your side is when I'm really at home
 Always and forever, that's a promise I made,
 you're the reason why I'm smiling every start
 of the day and I hope you know I mean it
 every time that I say "I love you" always and forever
 and it will always be the same.
 I want to be there for you,
 crying every time you blush,
 sharing laughter with you,
 when I look into your eyes I know our
 love is really true and nothing I
 won't do if I can see my babe smile.
 Remember you can call me every
 time you feeling down
 No girl can take your place and
 love me like the way you do
 So I'm gonna hold on tight 'cause I need
 you by my side
 It's me and you against the world babe
 We were created to find each other,
 for us to love forever,
 our hands holding tight as I look into
 the eyes of that one special person that will
 complete my life,
 you were the one I chose out of all the
 rest, the one I'll always cherish and put
 in my heart
 just to stay in your arms as you hold me tight,
 cause babe being with you just feels so right.
 Every single second that I'm living, I'm
 thinking of you.
 How we met was destiny, our love is
 honest and true,
 tell me what am I supposed to do if I
 ain't got you here, I want to be the one that's by
 your side for the years to come,
 I want to be the one that's gonna fight away
 all your tears,
 Replacing it with happiness and taking away
 all of your fears, one day we're gonna look at our
 pictures and reminisce, all the crazy things you do
 to me with just a little kiss.
 Every time you smile I can't explain the
 feeling inside always here to treat you good,
 Promise to me babe
 that you'll never go away.
 I love you babe always and forever!
 It's only gonna be you and me!
 'Cause I ain't ever letting go!
 Just wanted you to know
 that babe
 I love you!!

-Young C

From The Beat: Never be ashamed to let her know that. If she knows, she'll understand exactly how deep you go. But at the same time, don't let this just be words. It's good to hear that you'll treat her right and be by her side, but it means nothing if you don't do it. Try to remember that on the outs, and good luck with her, man.



One in a Million

Every time, I thought I had a best friend something would end up wrong. Either they would do me dirty, or not be as real as I thought they were. But this whole time I had a best friend right beside me and that's my sister, Stephanie. It didn't matter what it was she never left me hanging and I love her for that and "no" "one" can take her place. I know I'm away right now but when you're feeling down just remember "Things are going to get easier." And just remember there ain't no sisters like us, you and I, are one in a million so if you ever feel lonely crack a smile because really I'm right beside you. Love you Steph, one love.

-Randie and Miranda

From the Beat: It is true that good or best friends are not easy to come by. It is much like have a romantic relationship; time, patience, trust, and compatibility are involved in these relationships. When your best friend is also your family, that's a blessing.

Drugs And The Effects

I think everybody has their own idea on what the worst drug is. I think that drug is Meth because it doesn't come from Earth and it's made from cleaner and all kinds of weird stuff. But not all drugs are bad, like weed.

Weed is the perfect medicine and the side effects aren't that bad like other medications where the side effects are soreness, the runs, or headache.

The side effects of weed is hungry, happy, sleepy, so when you're mad and want to hurt someone, just smoke some weed. Then you'll be happy, you'll eat everything, then go to sleep. And it gets me mad when people say weed can kill you.

It won't kill you for 60 years if you smoke 5 times a day. But if you take a bunch of Tylenol, kiss your ass good by. Well time to go, so remember weed is good for you and next time you're seeking medication smoke some weed.

-Hector

From the Beat: The most important thing to remember is that with misuse, any can drug can be dangerous, or harmful in some way to your life. Your points about conventional medicine are interesting, though. You're right, a lot of "over the counter" drugs that are socially accepted as safe actually are potentially dangerous or have dangerous side effects. Why do you think society accepts some things as "safe" and other things as "unsafe"? Why do you think some drugs are illegal while others are not? Is it really that black and white?

You Lied

You said you wouldn't leave
You said we'd never die
I thought we'd last forever
At least I know I tried
I thought you loved me and you would always be there
I know I don't deserve this
It truly isn't fair
The reason why you left I truly can't explain
Maybe you didn't love me that I do not know
Only time could tell the things you failed to show
So, just why did you leave me so lonely and cold
All by myself with no one to hold
My darling baby I miss you so much
Please come home to me cuz my only cure is the warmth of your touch
But don't worry my love for you know all things must end
Even though it is over now can you still be my friend?

-Rudy

From The Beat: We like the way your poem moves from feelings of betrayal to feelings of acceptance. Your poem shows how a person can learn to let go and stay positive.

Lost It

People talk about how their dad's aren't around, and how there aren't really any good fathers out there.

Well, I was three months pregnant and the baby's dad wanted the baby more than I did. He told his mom and his brother. He would tell me if I didn't want to take care of it, he would. But he would always tell me he wanted to be there, not like his father. He wouldn't care if it was a boy or girl, as long as it was mine and his.

Now, see even though his whole family knew, my aunt was the one who knew – not my mom. The day I was going to tell her was the day I lost it. I was coming home and I heard noise upstairs. So I went up when I got to the top, there was these guys robbing my house. I started to run down the stairs, but one of the guys saw me and pushed me down.

When I woke up, there was blood everywhere. I called my aunt to come and get me. She took me to the hospital and told my mom I was staying with her. My mom never knew about it. When I came back, I had to tell him I lost his baby. When I told him, he went crazy. He started to blame me. He said I did it on purpose. He told me he hated me. There was nothing I could do. So I left. This all happened two months before I came here.

-Monkey

From The Beat: Good grief, this story is so intense. You told us about it so non-chalantly but it must have been hard for you as well. We hope you reunite with this young man one day and hug each other for a long time.

The Worst Drug Hands Down Is Meth

I think the worst drug is meth because it takes over your life. I think people are hooked on it because they get influenced to do it and that sucks. Meth shouldn't be even made because that made my life bad because my mom was a fiend.

That sucks because all I had was a girlfriend for five years. She was always there for me. She was like the one who kept me focused in school and all. I will always remember you and you know who you are.

-A sober son

From The Beat: We're sorry that you had that experience with your mom. Addiction can really tear up a family, but it's good that you had your girlfriend there for you. Always remember that your loved ones are a better support system than drugs.

Weed Smoker

To me there is no bad drug unless you do it too much. But for me, I don't got to trip about that, 'cause the only drug I do is not really a drug. I just smoke weed, but most of the time I drink. I don't think I'm going to stop drinking yet cause I know it's not time yet and when the time comes, I'm still not going to stop until I really have to, 'cause I don't like to be sober. And weed is good for you and it can't kill you so why stop? If it kills brain cells, just wait two weeks and you'll get them back, then start again. Well with that said, I'm out.

-Wyno

From The Beat: You're right that overuse is probably the most dangerous thing about drugs. However, you make several wrong assumptions here. Alcohol and weed are both drugs. The fact that you won't stop drinking even when "the time comes" to stop makes it sound like you already have some sort of a reliance on it and aren't going to handle alcohol responsibly. It is virtually impossible to overdose on weed, but that does not mean that it can be used without discretion. It can have very bad effects on your health when used a lot, and can hurt other areas of your life just as harshly, such as causing you to perform worse in school, lose friendships, or spend all your money on drugs. It sounds like you need to educate yourself a little more on the realities of drugs, and start trying to be more responsible about what you put in your body.

The Worst Drug

For me, in my opinion, the worst drug is crystal meth because it gets a lot of people addicted to it. A lot of times people can't let go of the drug and lose their jobs and family. Some even lose family because they get so addicted that they don't have any more money and steal from their family. Crystal meth also is bad for your own health. Some of the effects are that it makes you skinny and not get hungry as much.

-my thoughts

From The Beat: You seem to understand the risk of this dangerous drug very well. Have you personally known anyone who was addicted to crystal meth? What was that experience like for you?

Thoughts

I'm not feeling the topic so I'm going to try to write something.

Me and my G's are stuck in this facility, I feel like I won't get out till another century, so for now I'm going through this misery, I can't wait 'till I get out so I can be free.

Basically me and my G's will become another casualty, six out of ten will hit the penitentiary, the rest won't make it past the age of 23.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: We're glad that you wrote even though you weren't feeling the topic. It's great that you came up with this because it was something you felt inclined to write about, not because somebody asked you to write about it. With that said, this is a good poem. We found the line: "Basically me and my G's will become another casualty, six out of ten will hit the penitentiary, the rest won't make it past the age of 23," to be especially powerful. Keep writing!

METH

The worst drug to me is meth. One of my family members has lost everything they had because of this drug. They even lost their mind. They hear voices and yell at people, see things that aren't there, and worst of all, don't trust any of their family that loves them and has always been there for them.

-No joke

From the Beat: Addiction has the terrifying power to totally transform a person. What was your family member like before he or she changed like this? What have you learned from watching him or her go down this path?

I Love Crystal Meth

What up Beat, this is that one and only G worm and today I'm going to write about the drug everyone says is the worst which is crystal meth, but to be honest I love that stuff.

I love putting a rock in the pipe, burning that mother, letting it melt then taking a fat hit and blowing a cloud that looks like it belongs in the sky. But to be honest I know it's bad but I can't quit at the same time. I'm fiending the crystal but I hope I could just gain weight and get big and not be so skinny and maybe fix my teeth, so please everybody pray for me, but I'm out I'm going to fiend in my room.

-G worm

From The Beat: Drugs are incredibly hard to turn away from, but this is what you need to do, and as soon as you can, because it sounds like meth has you in its grip. Think about what you have to gain from meth, and what you have to lose. It is incredibly unhealthy, transforms a normal person into a fiend, and can ruin a life in so many different ways. At this point, it is in no way worth the artificial happiness that its high gives you. Try and prove to yourself that you can be drug-free, and if you can't, consider getting outside assistance to help keep you off of it.

The Control Drug

The worst drug is crystal meth because it takes control of your life. It makes you do things to hurt the people you love and care about. You start stealing from your family.

-P

From the Beat: When someone has a powerful addiction, often the only thing that seems to matter to them is satisfying their habit (whether that means going hungry or stealing to get money to buy more drugs with) and this can totally destroy friendships and relationships. Have you had any experiences with drug addicts in your life? How have these experiences affected you?

Stay Together For The Kids

-Tom, Mark, and Travis

From The Beat: We did not include the body of this writing because it was lyrics from the Blink 182 song "Stay Together For The Kids." Instead of using preexisting lyrics, we'd love to hear what you have to say in your own words, we're sure it will be great, personal, and more meaningful than Blink 182 lyrics could be.

Almost Broke

Last time I almost cried is when I was told I was being tried as an adult. At the time my brother was in Elmwood and I was 17.

-Reaper

From the Beat: That's a very difficult thing to hear. What thoughts were running through your head? How do you feel about it now? We'd like to hear more about this event in your life.

Advice On Heroin

The worst drug I could think of is heroin because I wouldn't like to see my homeboys end up overdosed or dead because it is a bad habit, it will get into your mind and it will destroy your life, so I tell my homeboys do not ever start using the needle.

-Indio

From The Beat: Good advice. We're happy that you're aware of the dangers of this drug and that you are willing to spread this knowledge to your friends and to the beat readers out there.

Drugs

The worst drugs that I've tried are meth and cocaine. But it wasn't that bad, it did mess me up a little but I got hella hynas. But the good thing was that I never got addicted. I did it for like 6 months straight but I'm glad that I decided to stop and I did, and also because it was against my varrio so, I had to stop. Well that's all I got to say.

-Miclo

From The Beat: We're glad that you stopped doing those drugs and that you didn't get addicted, but remember that it might not always work out that way. These are highly addictive drugs and even if you try not to, it's very easy to suddenly find yourself an addict. With drugs like these that alter the chemical makeup of your brain, you're not always in control.

The Birth And My Tears

The last time I cried was when my son was born! It made me feel that I had just received my biggest responsibility in this world and I felt I wasn't ready for it and still I believe I'm not ready, but I'm going to do my best. I also cry to see my son and how much he's grown and thousand tears of joy.

-G. Lil' One

From The Beat: Being a father is a huge responsibility, and even if you're not ready for it, we're glad that you have decided to still do the best you can. It's very clear that you have a huge amount of love for your son by how emotional you get when you see him. Use this love as motivation to get out and stay out, take this responsibility and build a good future for your son.

Risk

I have taken many risks throughout my life. Because of the risks I've taken, I've shed tears of a clown.

I'm a habitual incomer, here in jail. Because of my dumb decisions and saying "oh well", the risks I've taken are life-threatening and heartbreaking.

Risks of taking my own life or someone else's, doing things that I thought I would never do. Walking into places or people without having a clue, jumping in cars, walking into bars, I look at my freedom and damn that seems far!

I am a risk taker, both good and bad, but the life I'm in, risk taking is all I have... Thanks Beat.

-Tweety

From The Beat: Tweety, we have been reading about your life for a while now, and if you don't change this "risk taking" behavior, your luck will run out. Don't let us read about a risk you took to only find your end. Find a way to change now before it's too late.

I cried

The last time I cried it felt like I died, I was lost in my life, full of strife with no pride in my stride

-Lil' Lonely

From The Beat: After reading your last piece about your child, we, at The Beat, understand your pain.

A Risk

When I was 10 years old, I took a risk by not thinking how bad I'm going to mess my life up after I took a hit off that blunt. All I could think about was whether or not all my homies are going to like or dislike me if I don't.

Now when I am sitting behind these walls, walking with my hands behind my back, I think, why did I take that hit? Why did I care whether or not they will like or dislike me, but now I realize I can't change my past. All I can do is look forward and think how I'm going to avoid not hitting that blunt when I get out.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: The question you must ask yourself, the last time you took a hit of that "blunt", was it worth it? Remember these people you call friends are your friends as long as you have the drugs, but when you really need them, are they there for you?

The Family Jewel

In about 2001, my brother got his chick pregnant and they were together for about half the pregnancy, then my brother started to get addicted to drugs. Not giving a crap about his soon-to-come son or how his baby's mamma's doing.

Finally he heard that his baby's mama was in labor. He was all drugged up and had gone to the hospital to see his kid, and his kid was born. It was a boy, and they named him Emilliano.

Then the doctor said his son has to stay in the hospital for a few days. After we heard that, my brother was still all drugged up. I went back to the hospital. Within two weeks, my brother's baby's mom, her mom, grandma, and a lot of people were there. I saw my brother's baby's mama holding my nephew. He was dead. My brother found out and started to cry, we had his funeral and it was pretty sad.

-Antonette

From The Beat: It's always hard to hear about the death of a child no matter the age, we at the beat are sorry to hear about your family's loss. Before you have to attend another funeral, get help for your brother before it's too late. Encourage him to address his illness. Don't let the drugs consume his life, find a way to help him stop.

A Running Risk

The biggest risk I've ever taken would be me going on the run from my probation, and I was doing just fine. The reason I took such a big risk was because of some stupid bucket head that wanted me to go party with her and her home girls. I did and that's how the whole thing began. That's when I started messing up and doing drugs, but I'm glad I got caught up doing some stupid stuff rather than something serious!!!

-Paul

From The Beat: Maybe your right about getting caught before you did something that you would have regretted for the rest of your life. Learn from your mistakes and make yourself a better person.

Pains

Pains of life

Mothers are getting beaten

Fathers doing drugs

People getting beaten from the fuzz

Doesn't this bring tears to your eyes?

Nothing but lies

-Painful Lies

From The Beat: Interesting poem, but you leave us in total limbo. Tell us more about the mother and father. Tell us about those getting beat by the fuzz and why. Most of all, tell us your name so we can truly understand the tears in your eyes.

The Cancer Stick

I guess I could say the worst drug I've tried would have to be a cancer stick.

I remember the day I first tried one, it was about 8 in the morning, and I had just got to school. I saw one of my homies smoking one, so I walked up and said "What's that?" He told me and I said let me get one. I got one, lit it up, and from that day I never stopped smoking.

-Paul

From The Beat: It's good to see that you consider cigarettes as a drug, many don't. If you've been in detention for more then a week, you are no longer addicted to them, so now is a perfect time to quit. There is nothing good about smoking cigarettes, and for someone your age, it's illegal.

Corrupted minds

When I die, heck with it, I want to go to hell because I'm a piece of crap.

It's not hard to tell.

It doesn't make sense going to heaven with goody, goodies dressed in white.

I like black time and black hoodies.

God will probably have me on some real strict shhh.

No sleeping all day, not getting my pleasure on, hanging with goody goodies, chillin' in paradise.

Heck no,

I want to take guns and shoot dice.

My mother doesn't even love me like she did when I was younger, sucking on her chest just to stop my hunger.

I wonder if I die, would tears come to her eyes?

Forgive me for my lies.

My baby's momma kisses me but she's glad I'm gone, because she knew her sister and I had something going on.

- Nuevo Mexico

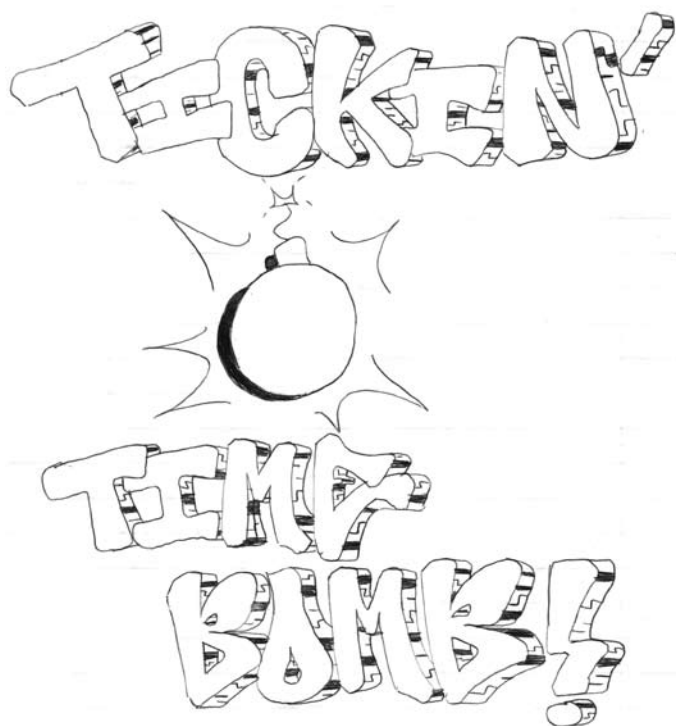
From The Beat: First off you are not a piece of crap, you are a person, a person that is going through some hard times. Forget about heaven or hell; think about what you have now. Think of your child, and yes, your mother will most certainly shed tears if you die. What mother wouldn't? You need to stop feeling sorry for yourself and step up to the plate, if nothing else, do it for your child. Or is this a child you don't care about?

The Worst Drug is Alcohol

Alcohol is the worst drug in my book—I see many people in the street because of alcohol. I keep landing back in here because of it. I've lost many people because they were drinking too much. I'm so surrounded by it, it makes it so hard for me to stay sober. I want to stop, but it's harder than I thought.

-Jo Jo

From The Beat: We know some people that quit drinking, and they all said the first thing they had to do was get a new set of people to hang around with – people who were trying to get sober themselves. Do you have square friends who don't drink? Better yet, have you thought of AA?



Welcome To The 7-11

What's up, Beat? My friends call me the Seven/Eleven H-man. Things happen so quick. Shhh happens. I just went to 7-11 to use the phone to talk to my mom, and the clerk got the nerve to say some shhh about my mom.

So my reflex is to whoop the shhh out of him, and then I wake up in here and got a month sentence, but who gives a damn? Oh, well, I'll be back. I heard some people are tryin' to get me back for the attack.

-The Seven/Eleven H-man

From The Beat: Are you taking Anger Management classes? Because as you've seen, when you lose your cool, it gives the system an excuse to take you in. And you don't need that, you got a life to live!

My Mom Leaves Juvy Without Me

I get mad when my mom come and see me, because she leave without me, and because I want to go home and see my sister and dad.

-No Name

From The Beat: It must hurt when your mom can't take you home with her, and it may be even worse for her that she can't get you out of juvy to go with her. So when you get home again, then what? It's up to you.

No More

My love for Jess is gettin' stronger each day I'm separated from her. Weird, I never thought I would fall in love. I thought I was gonna stay a mac for life. I love her with all my life and I hope to continue to talk to her when I get out. I love you, Baby.

-No Name

From The Beat: It's amazing how love can shake your concept of who you are, isn't it? What kinds of things will you have to "give up" to get out and be free with her? And is it a sacrifice?

Joyful

I am joyful because I do not have too much longer in here and I'm not coming back ever again. I have really learned my lesson and then some. I think the biggest lesson was to focus on me, but not to be selfish.

I am also joyful for the fact that I was appointed to therapy. That will help me with my anger, emotions, how I deal with my problems, and my relationship to my mom.

I am trying to talk to my PO to see if he might let me out on a bracelet early, so then I could work out my situation with my mom and family. I would really like to fix my problems so I could move on with my life for the better. Wish me luck!

-Dian

From The Beat: This all good news, congratulations. And good luck with the therapist, we hope he or she gives you some ideas on how to make your life go better!

Leaving Juvy For Good

Hey, Beat, what it do? Yea, I'm back in the halls, but I don't care. I am actually smiling, because it's all good. It could have been worse. I was expecting to get sent to another state, but the greatest thing happened—the judge and the probation department decided to give me thirty days in the halls, and when I'm done, my case is to be dismissed.

I'm so thankful that that happened. I have been in and out of here since I was fourteen. Now I'm eighteen and I'm finally leaving. I've been here thirteen times and I've literally spent over a year of my life in this place, and I'm finally done with it. I have twenty days to go and I feel like I'm blessed. Last time I was here I was here for five and a half months straight, and I broke my leg.

Hey, yo, God really does exist and miracles do happen. I was one the run for eight months and the sheriffs finally caught up with me at my house, but, hey, it's really not that bad. Things could always be worse. I hope to get a job and get my GED when I get out. To all who are struggling—keep ya heads up.

-JLee

From The Beat: Congratulations on your freedom! But you'll be facing the same challenges you were looking at while you were a juvenile, and you know the system doesn't play, so get that job, and that diploma, and then hit up The Beat to let us know how you're doing!

When I Grow Up

When I grow up I want to be a gangster, because that's how my life started when I was younger. We'll still try to be good in here. Most of my homies are in here, but we still be putting it down. We're just waiting to get out and be in the varrio.

-Rey

From The Beat: Whatever threatens to hurt or worse anyone, including your enemies, can lead to nothing but more destruction, imprisonment and/or death. If you can persuade your chales that they can create futures beyond the varrio, maybe you can also save their lives.

Watsonville

I am from the town of Watsonville where it's known for the fresas (strawberries) so we call it Fresaville. We kick it from sun rise to sundown. I was born and raised in my town. I love my town. It may be small but I love my town. I just like walking around there.

Like I said, I was born and raised there, now I'm going to die in my town. Until the day my casket drops, I will live this life ... is what I've always said. So my town is where I'll be. I'm just waiting to get out of here because I miss my town of Watsonville.

-Jason

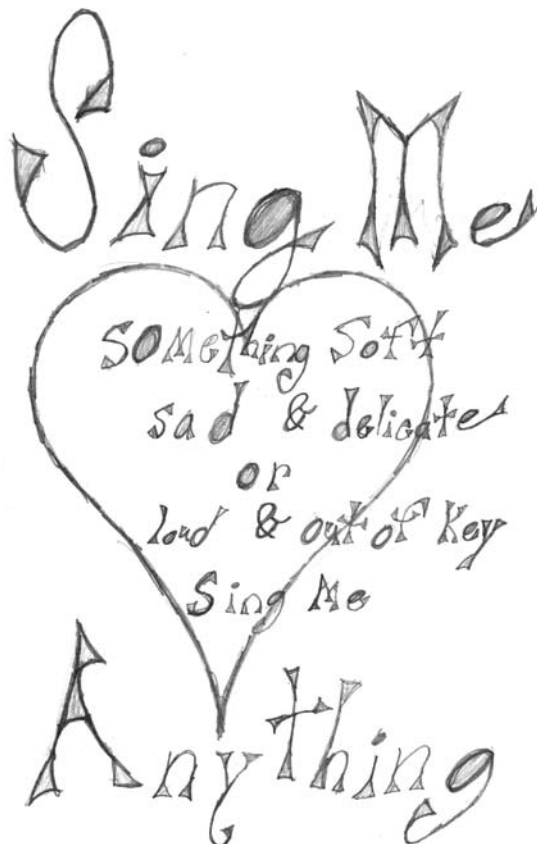
From The Beat: Jason, we know you love your town, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's what you do in your town that matters. What are you doing to make your town a place that everyone who lives there can feel proud of? If you love something, you protect it and care for it. That "Can't stop, won't stop" business is not just nonsense, it's dangerous. Get real, man. You're not helping yourself, your family, or your beloved town by acting like a gangster. Spending your life in lockdown wouldn't be so cool, would it? It wouldn't be doing your town a darn bit of good. Stop talking tough and start acting like a good citizen. Every town needs good citizens, if it wants to be a good town. Start behaving as if you really cared about your town.

What would MLK think today?

Martin Luther King would say, "I thought black people worked so hard for freedom from the white people and you just give it right back to them by letting them lock you up and control your life. You should work on getting that back."

-Nathan

From The Beat: Before your time, many people suffered and fought for the cause of freedom, often losing their lives, like Martin Luther King did. Think about what freedom is worth to you. Show your pride for who you are. Live a life that you can be proud of and which justifies the sacrifices of great leaders like MLK.



©Alex



Way Different

On the streets it is way different. Up in here are people who don't agree. They are just some punks. I hate that. Come at me when it happens and see me when you need me. I keep it strong when I need to. I keep it real for my people. That's how it is in my hood. I'm coming up in the world and making my way in life. You know, that's how it is- you feel me? To my family, keep it cool.

-JuJu

From The Beat: What's the bit with the tough talk? We hear you, but we don't have to like what we hear. This is a time for reflection, for thinking about what you can do to create a better life for yourself, a life that you and your family can be proud of. Knock off the tough guy stuff and face the reality that you need to change your behavior. When you're ready to get real, we'll feel you.

Chillin' Till I'm Locked Up

When I'm not locked up, the thing that makes me different is that I'm not locked up. I'm also one of a kind because of my name. It describes who I am. The way I act and the people I talk to gives people a small description of who and how I might be. Chillin' with the homeboys is pretty much all I like to do. I'm from San Jose, and I chill pretty much all of the time. I basically just cruise around and party with my homies.

-Miguel

From The Beat: We sense you are way too bright to believe what you've written here. Sounds to us like you're actually a lazy guy, a guy too lazy to take himself seriously and develop his potential. If you like where you're headed now, just keep cruising. It always leads to the same place - the place you're in now. Otherwise, get off your butt and use that good brain of yours. It's a gift, but only if you use it.

Begin Today

So brief a time we have to stay
Along this dear, familiar way
It seems to me we should be kind
To those whose lives touch yours and mine

The hands that serve us everyday
Should we not help them while we may
They are so kind that none can guess
How soon they'll cease our lives to bless

The hearts that love us, who may know
How soon the long, long way must go
Then might we not their faults forgive
And make them happy while they live

So many faults in life there are
We need not go to seek them far
But time is short and you and I
Might let the little faults go by

And seek for what is true and fine
In those whose lives touch yours and mine
This seems to me the better way
Then why not, friend, begin today

Living Epistles

I am my neighbor's Bible
She reads me when we meet
Today she sees me in my house
Tomorrow on the street

She may be relative or friend
Or slight acquaintance be
She may not even know my name
But she is reading me

I am my mailman's Bible
He reads me everyday
What he puts in my mailbox
Shows who o'er me holds sway

It may be by my letters
Or magazines I read
But he can tell my character
By things on which I feed

I am my children's Bible
They read me everyday
The way I dress, the way I act
And by the things I say

They know whether I am sincere
E'en though to church I go
In love's obedience to God
Indeed my children know

Guard Your Mind
Be careful what you think
Shun every evil strife
Because one thing is certain
Your thoughts can run your life

Wherever dwells the mind
The eyes and ears go, too
What you see and hear
Affects the work you do

Keep your thought-life pure
Take captive each wrong done
And in the name of Jesus
The victory is won!

Our next writer is no stranger to our publication as he constantly drops creative writing, and knowledgeable pieces. He writes with his intentions to educate everyone who picks up a Beat. Herbert is writing to us from Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Mo. Herbert is religious but doesn't force his preaching on anybody, his advice is there for all. He also writes articles about U.S. History and gives his political opinions backed up by a few facts. But don't let us hold you up. Wherever you may be in the Pen, in a cell, in your dorm, on the toilet, just sit back and enjoy these pieces!

God's Will

I know not by what methods rare
But this I know: God answers prayer
I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the guise I thought
I leave my prayer to Him alone
Whose will is wiser than my own.

Guard Your Mind
Be careful what you think

Wonder

We all have wondered more or less
Why this or that must be
Why some of us find happiness
That others fail to see

Why some of us are lifted high
And lead throughout life's role
While others even though they try
Can never reach their goal

Why some can meet the tempter's wrath
And find the strength to stay
Upon the straight and narrow path
And never lose their way

While other's walking by their side
Will try to beat life's game
And wander off where paths are wide
That lead to sin and shame

And oftentimes when death draws near
With sickle grim and cold
To reap the life of someone dear
The young as well as old

We'll hear the question asked by some
If all of this is just
If life is worth the struggle from
The embryo to the dust

We ponder over many thing,
But here we'll never know
The reason for the happenings
That mystify us so

But when earth's scenes recede and we
Respond to Heaven's call
We'll see things then as God doth see
And understand them all.

My First Love

Throughout my life, for many different reasons, I have never felt completely accepted. I've never been a part of anything, never felt that deep connection to another person. No matter how many people I surround myself with, all my relationships, be they familial, friendly, or romantic, remain superficial, and I am lonely. A survivor of child abuse, rape, and prostitution.

I was born and raised in the inner-city ghetto slums, Detroit, MI. and the South Bronx projects, the very heart of New York. It was there that I came to know the only woman who always accepts me, never accused me, and loves me unconditionally. She asks only to be loved and respected in return.

I've learned at an early age that no matter what ills I suffer at the hands of the world, I can always return to her. She caresses me with long blades of grass, delicate flowers, and feather-soft leaves. She cradles me in moist earth, allowing me to shed my tears, as a breeze whispers comfort to my trembling soul.

She welcomes me just as graciously when I have a smile on my face, embracing me in cool lake waters, leaving a warm kiss of the sun upon my cheeks. With her, I am never lonely. In her arms is the only place I feel truly safe. In the midst of a concrete jungle, I have only to walk through Central Park or look up at the sky to feel her presence. Each moment I am separated from her, I long to be with her, even more so confined in this drab, cruel prison cell 23 hours a day. She is the air I breathe, the plants that nourish me, and the water of life that wets my lips. Without her, I don't exist.

Someday I hope to find a woman of flesh and blood to spend the remainder of my life with; someone to love and be loved by. Someone to share my world with, walking down wooded paths together, sleeping with nothing to cover us but a blanket of stars, and surrendering ourselves to the chill of a mountain stream. But no matter how intensely I feel for her, that love can never surpass the depth and strength of the perfect love I feel for Mother Nature.

Lord Send Me

So send I you to labor unrewarded
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn, and scoffing
So send I you to toil for me alone
So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred
To eyes made blind, because they will not see
To spend, though it be blood, to spend, and spare not
So send I you, to taste of Calvary
So send I you Lord, here am I! Send me!

True Nature

I have a constant ache for Mother Earth, so burned, depleted, burdened, pierced, and raped by those who lack the sense to know her worth.

The activists seem weak, a little draped, and can't protect her water, soil, and air from ghastly, greedy, guzzling, global glitches or corporation rapist-billionaires.

It hurts to think of landfills, oceans, rivers, ditches, replenished constantly with trash and toxic waste, and city dwellers sick from cars and smoke.

To know that even boatloads full of cash, with good intentions, sink or spill their cargo like a bad joke.

Then how can one begin to do their part? The answer lies, friend, in purity of the heart.

Revolutionary Prison Activism

One thing has become absolutely clear to the U.S. government and the prison industrial complex (financed and motivated by capitalism and imperialism) is that prisoners are incorporating a revolutionary political ideology into almost all prisons in this country, if not all of them. The government has used a variety of methods to suppress the storm clouds of revolutionary activism inside these prison slave plantations, but they can only kill "us," and not our ideas.

Circumstances throughout prisons' history has compelled captives to openly express their newfound consciousness through a variety of internal and external outlets. The internal struggles range from violence to organizing political study groups to encouraging anyone who desires change to be afford the outlet to seek such change. Some other struggles may consist of creating revolutionary "people's libraries," which can give anyone seeking knowledge access to them. The external struggle begins with getting a direct line of communication with grassroots organizations who are engaged in exposing the politics of prisons and the inherent abuse taking place. I encourage prisoners in jails, juveniles, and prisons to "write" and tell their stories to the people. In so doing, we each create a human chain linking prison activism with street activism, making it one struggle. This is happening all across the U.S. as we speak.

The great thing about prison activism is that when prisoners (in all institutions of incarceration) become aware of their rights, and those that are being violated, many of them will challenge/expose the corrupt or inhumane actions of their slave plantation masters. The backlash to prison activism is being targeted by the slave masters for long-term isolation. This isolation can involve placement in control units, censorship and destruction of our mail, and materials of revolutionary content being confiscated or scanned before being deemed allowable. But none of this should deter or stop us from telling the world our story through our political expression through the pages of The Beat Within and other publishing firms. Our bodies are held and confined to these cells, rooms, and dorms, but our words and ideas can never be restrained unless we want them to be.

Prisoncrats, Juvenilecrats, and Jailcrats across this God forsaken country realize that the conditions that we each oppose here are degrading, cruel, and dehumanizing. Only superficial changes are made to give the illusion that they are capable of addressing the problems we say need fixing. But the only real changes that are made quickly are those that enhance security, strengthen repression and benefit the control mentality.

As revolutionaries, we must each continue to encourage political activism by keeping our doors and hearts open to the plight of prisoners held in all of the U.S. slave plantations that are genuinely doing something to change their lives and the prison slave plantations themselves. The struggle on the inside is forever forged together. "Dare to struggle. Dare to win," as cited by ex-Black Panther chairman Fred Hampton, Sr., who was assassinated by the police and F.B.I. on December 4, 1969.

"Revolutionary consciousness is the only real hope for those oppressed by the system. Without the cold and desolation of winter there would not be the warmth and splendor of spring! Calamity has hardened my mind and turned it to steel!"--George Jackson

Unavoidable Rebellion

When prisons and other institutions to incarcerate human beings are built across this vast capitalist country, they often bring new employment to a rural white community. Those civilians who are employed to maintain security are easily stressed out by the day to day complication of trying to run a slave plantation. The newly employed are also poorly trained, if at all, in how to facilitate conflict resolution, and the fact that many of these employees were mentally disturbed when they were hired in as well as mentally retarded. As a result, many prisons have had their share of strikes and riots.

In modern American history, there have been three major waves and one ripple of prison disturbance. The first wave occurred from 1929 to 1930 when there were eleven major prison uprisings across the nation. The second wave started in 1952 and ended in 1955. Riots in this period were more widespread and costly (as were the Michigan Prison riots in early 1981) than those were during the Depression. During these four years, there were forty-seven major prison rebellions that resulted in considerable loss of life and property damage in excess of 10 million or more dollars. The last major wave was from 1968 through 1971. During this period there were forty major disturbances, including the historic insurrection at the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. The ripple of prison disturbances that took place from 1981 to 1991 witnessed only a few significant events. Of these, only one, the 1987 Cuban immigrant riot at the U.S. penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, was serious. Placing these four surges of prison insurrection in historical perspective illuminates the politics of imprisonment in capitalist America.

From the insurrection of the 1960s and 1970s American prison officials became aware of the serious threat to the American prison system posed by politically conscious/unified prisoners who identified themselves as "the new revolutionary man or woman." Many prisoners of these times (and even today) were conscious of the racist politics of imprisonment in America. They then could see what we each see now-- the national minorities are over-represented behind the iron curtain and understood all too well that their position in

society accounted for that disparity. The revolutionaries on the inside rallied around figures like Comrade George L. Jackson (and other activists) who even today remains a source of powerful thought-provoking debates and activism inside and outside of these institutional walls. His most influential books were *Soledad Brother: the Prison Letters of George L. Jackson* (published in 1970 and circulated widely) and *Blood in My Eye* (published posthumously in 1972). The murder of Comrade George by California's racist Prisoncrats inside the slave plantation of San Quentin State Prison on August 21st, 1971 set the stage for the most political and bloodiest prison uprising in American history. Additionally, eight hundred prisoners fasted at Attica prison in a silent protest/memorial to Comrade George on August 22nd, 1971 following his murder. Super-maximum prison and control units were the state's response as they learned to suppress prison slave plantation riots.

I encourage you, brothers and sisters, wherever you're incarcerated to never drop your guard, no matter where you are. Our struggle is one that requires perseverance, relentlessness, determination and heart. This is not to say that we won't have our bad days--we're human, after all. The objective in all of this is to never stay down too long, always pick yourself back up, shake and brush yourself off, and embrace a new day.

As revolutionary-minded men and women, and this also involves the youth in juveniles and detention centers across America, regardless of our nationality, we can all use a motivational push sometimes. We can't simply wait to see if the slave masters of these institutional slave plantations are gonna do the right things or not. Comrade George said, "Action establishes the front." We must never be afraid to take action, however and whenever necessary. Revolutionary justice has never been a crime. Just as George Jackson and his comrades in their day, we are "in the business of attempting to transform the criminal mentality into a political revolutionary mentality." This is the key. So stay strong, brothas and sistas, inside these plantations--our communities are in dire need of the new men and women and youths to return home. Remember always that our struggle is one. Power to the People, Freedom Now. In Solidarity Your Brother in Struggle!

Israel's "Crime" Is Its Insistence on Surviving

Before sending Lewis and Clark west, Thomas Jefferson dispatched Meriwether Lewis to Philadelphia to see Dr. Benjamin Rush. The eminent doctor prepared a series of scientific questions for the expedition to answer. Among them, writes Stephen Ambrose, "What affinity between their (the Indians) religious ceremonies and those of the Jews?" Jefferson and Lewis, like many of their day and ours, were fascinated by the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and thought they might be out there on the Great Plains.

They weren't. They weren't anywhere. Their disappearance into the mists of history since their exile from Israel in 722 B.C. is no mystery. It is the norm, the rule for every ancient people defeated, destroyed, scattered and exiled. With one exception, a miraculous story of redemption and return, after not a century or two but 2,000 years.

Remarkably, that miracle occurred in our time. Last week marked its 60th anniversary: the return and restoration of the remaining two tribes of Israel, Judah and Benjamin, later known as the Jews, to their ancient homeland.

Besides restoring Jewish sovereignty, the establishment of the State of Israel embodied many subsidiary miracles, from the creation of the first Jewish army since Roman times to the only recorded instance of the resurrection of a dead language, Hebrew, now the daily tongue of a vibrant nation of 7 million.

As historian Barbara Tuchman once wrote, Israel is "the only nation in the world that is governing itself in the same territory, under the same name, and with the same religion and same language as it did 3,000 years ago."

During its early years, Israel was often spoken of in such

romantic terms. Today, such talk is considered naive, anachronistic, even insensitive, nothing more than Zionist myth designed to hide the true story, i.e. the Palestinian narrative of dispossession.

Not so, Palestinian suffering is, of course, real and heart wrenching, but what the Arab narrative deliberately distorts is the cause of its own tragedy, the folly of its own fanatical leadership, from Haj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem (Nazi collaborator who spent World War II in Berlin), to Egypt's Gamal Abdel. Nasser to Yasser Arafat to Humas of today, that repeatedly chose war rather than compromise. Palestinian dispossession is a direct result of the Arab rejection then and now, of a Jewish state of any size on any part of the vast lands the Arabs claim as their exclusive patrimony. That was the cause of the war 60 years ago that, in turn, caused the refugee problem. And it remains the cause of war today.

Six months before Israel's birth, the United Nations had decided by a two-thirds majority that the only just solution to the British departure from Palestine would be the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state side by side. The undeniable fact remains: the Jews accepted that compromise, the Arabs rejected it. Israel's crime is not its policies but its insistence on living.

On the day the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular, make a collective decision to accept the Jewish state, there will be peace, as Israel proved with its treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Until that day, there will be nothing but war. And every "peace process," however cynical or well-meaning, will come to nothing.

A Tale of Three Trees

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away (just kidding, that's another story!)... Okay, here we are...

Long, long ago in a forest far, far way lived three very different trees. Although they were different, the three of them had one thing in common. They all had lofty aspirations to become something special in life. The olive tree dreamed of becoming a finely crafted treasure chest. It wanted to hold gold, silver, and precious jewels. One day, while out in the forest, a woodsman did in fact choose the olive tree. The olive tree was so thrilled! But when the craftsman began working on him, the tree realized they weren't making him into the beautiful treasure chest he envisioned. They were making him into a manger to hold food for dirty, smelly animals. Heartbroken because his dreams were shattered, he felt worthless and totally discouraged.

The second tree, which was a mighty oak tree, dreamed of becoming a huge ship that would one day carry kings across the vast ocean. When the woodsman cut down the oak, he got so excited! But as time went on, he realized that the craftsman was not making him into a huge ship. They were making him into a tiny, little fishing boat. He was crushed that his life, his dream, had come to this.

The third tree was a pine tree, tall and sturdy. His only dream in life was to continue growing taller as if reaching out to Heaven. But in a split second, a bolt of lightning sent it tumbling to the ground, destroying his dream along with it.

All three of these trees had felt like they failed, like they had lost their self worth. Not one of their dreams came to be. End of story, right? Wrong... God had other plans!

Many years later, Mary and Joseph couldn't find a place to have their baby, their beloved boy. They finally found a stable and when Jesus was born, they placed him in a manger made from ?...you guessed it, the olive tree! The olive tree wanted to hold precious jewels, but God had better plans...for it now held

Our next writer is a creative one coming from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, Ca. Darron uses his creativity and his imagination to tell a story that you can easily picture in your mind. His "Tale of Three Trees" is good one with a very important message behind it. So give Darron a read. You won't be disappointed.

the greatest mankind has ever known!

A few years went by and Jesus grew up. One day He needed a boat to cross to the other side of the lake. He did not choose a large, fancy ship but rather a small, simple fishing boat made from ?... yup, you guessed it!... the oak tree! The oak tree wanted to carry important kings across the ocean, but, once again, God had other plans... for the oak now carried the King of all kings!

A few more years went by and some Roman soldiers were rummaging around in the forest. They came across an old pile of scrap wood. The pine tree just knew they were coming to chop him up for fire wood. But, oddly and to his surprise, they cut only two small pieces out of him and formed a cross. And it was upon this pine tree that Jesus was crucified. That pine tree is still pointing people, God's people, toward Heaven to this very day!

So there you have it, the story of the three trees. Each one felt that they had lost their value, their self-worth, but in fact, each one, in its own way, became integral parts of the greatest story ever told! One thing you can be certain of... God knows your value. He sees the potential in all of us. You may not understand everything you are going through right now, but hold your head up high knowing that God is in control and has a great purpose in store for you! A plan for your life!

Your dreams may not be turning out the way you had hoped so far; worry not, for you have a lifetime ahead of you to "right" your ship. Learn from the mistakes that landed you where you are today. Take accountability (stop blaming others), be responsible for your own actions and stop blaming the circumstances around you. That, my friend, is the first step in becoming a man.

Collectively We Succeed

Silencing debate solves no problems; it only limits the range of possible solutions. Time has come for us to seek a reconciled solidarity based not on what we think is the answer, but on our shared desire to solve our problems.

Learn from my mistakes what not to do! We don't all come from the best of situations but we do have the ability to change the ones we are in. The many obstacles in this ghetto life, the desire to get rich by any means, success, and the difficulty in getting caught up. We all can relate to.

We must start using our talents in ways to better our communities and stop being explored by the media magazines. Speak our minds and be heard, not worrying if your ways and beliefs are right in someone else eyes. Just to have the choice, option and will to question, learn, understand, criticize, means that you are growing.

To be a critic is not necessarily to be an opponent; it just means you see a different route to take, even if it's to separate bullshhh from truth.

We need to prepare now for our future. Open up dialogues with all who are in your positions (opposed) because there is so much you can learn from the other side of the coins. Common ground built on mutual respect; to get passed the different races/backgrounds (outcast, victims of abuse. Rebels, dope fiends, middle class, rock bottom, blood, crip, Asians, north, south).

Let's put all of that aside for now and actually talk to one another instead of continuing an endless self defeating argument about who is and isn't keeping it real. "Two enemies in a boat in the ocean in the mist of a storm will work together to reach dry land".

MR. DANIELS

Our next writer is coming to us live and direct from California Corrections Institute, in Tehachapi, Ca. He's a very smart dude that really gets us readers to think. He clearly puts down some profitable knowledge on paper in these upcoming pieces. As he states in his upcoming piece we will succeed. But it's up to us to make it. Success is for us to make something out of nothing. It's not just gonna show up on your front door knocking. So kick back and soak up some game, as Mr. Daniels is gonna kick some real talk for y'all.

"Think About It"

Can it be explained why the majority of our heroes die these violent deaths? Only a chosen few get the chance to grow old. The most rebellious seem to die by another person of color. Either that or they end up dead by gunfire of an elected official. And the majority who grow old do so in a prison cell.

We use the saying "the man this, the man that". But it's our own doing the mass killin' these days.

We have been conditioned by society at large and programmed to channel all the hatred, frustrations, pains, anger that one feels for being oppressed and on thee receiving and of brutality on ourselves.

We respect those who screw us over, love those who mistreat you, believe those who lie to you, etc. But hate, mistrust and harm your own quicker than anyone else. Why is that? Everything we do is backwards? Dies and deception put in your mind to keep you confused. Wake up people you Can't expect your oppressor to get you out of a situation he himself put you in. so why thank the person for giving you part of what you truly deserve.

Dear Beat Within

This is a story I promised The Beat in my story, "The Escape," published in 2007. To be honest, I myself still find it unbelievable what happened to me really did happen. I know you yourself may find it unbelievable, unless you yourself ever experienced what I did. I don't think I'm the only person on earth this ever happened to; I believe this may have happened to other people somewhere.

I was exposed to radiation on purpose. But that wasn't the worst of it. What I'm about to tell you is horrendous. I was a trusting person at one time, very naive and I never in my worst nightmares dreamed or imagined such a terrible thing to happen to anyone, much less myself, especially myself. I have no clue or idea why such a terrible thing happened to me or was done to me. I never done such a thing to no one else and I believed in "do unto others as you would want them to do unto you." That is not true because they did unto me without cause or reason.

The day was October 5, 1996. I was in prison serving a nine year sentence for armed robbery. It actually started out as a petty theft at a Mervyn's. I was layering clothing and when I got caught I allegedly brandished a knife in order to get away. I was not a violent person by nature. I don't have a serious history of crime. I was raised by strict parents who worked and loved me and tried to teach me right from wrong for my own good.

I was in prison prior to this. My first time in prison in 1987 I served 16 months, and after that in 1991 I served two years, my first term for walk away escape from the minimum security county jail, and in 1990 I cashed some forged checks using my own name. I never seen nothing like what the COs did to me in 1996 ever happen to no one during my time in 1987 and 1991. I never even heard such a thing happening to anyone and the homeboys use to tell some awful stories of the COs (correctional officers) doing some awful things to people; beating them mostly or putting knives in their mattresses to set them up. I never believed these stories because, as I said, I was so naive and never seen the COs ever do anything bad. I held the COs with much esteem and respect because I was raised all my life by people to trust the authorities and that they were honest.

I was raised in a Christian group home and my dad, who was in the army and worked all his life in a career at Hewlett Packard in Palo Alto. I was raised by my mom, too, who has two brothers that were police officers. Not only was my dad in the army but his six brothers were, too. His youngest brother, Hector, got killed going to the Vietnam War. One night in 1980, my dad got pulled over by Sunnyvale Public Safety Police and he was drunk. Every Friday after work he and his brothers would meet at "The Frosted Mug" to cash their checks and drink beer.

The police escorted my dad home. He didn't get taken to jail because he was prominent in the community and earned a lot of respect from the right people, or maybe I should say "the white people." My dad was not white, although he knew a lot of white people, and for some mysterious reason his army records list his race as white, but back in 1961 you either were "white" or "negro." My dad's grandfather was a full-blooded Yaqui Indian who immigrated to Arizona

Our next writer is writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Our next writer submitted a story to us last time and promised us he was going to tell us about his story. James writes/speaks from personal experience, first hand. So take James story as lesson that prison is not the place you want to be. Glad to have you back James!

in 1908 and married a Yaqui Indian woman and settled in Douglas, Arizona, where my mom and dad were born and raised.

My dad had dark skin, jet black hair, and spoke Spanish as well as English. I look just like my dad, with dark bronze skin, jet black hair, but I don't speak Spanish as fluently as my dad did. My mom was half Yaqui Indian on her dad's side and her mom was Mexican from Mexico. My dad's grandfather who immigrated to Arizona in 1908 was from Sonora, Mexico, himself. My dad was 17 years old when he joined the U.S. Army in Arizona in 1961 and stayed in the army until 1969. I was born in 1965; my dad was stationed at Fort Ord and I was born in Mountain View, California. Had I been born in Arizona, I would have been part of a tight-knit family that looks out for each other for life from the day you're born. It's like that, too, in California, but I'm not from California, so I grew up alone.

When my dad died in 1985 I've never seen so many rich white people at a Mexican's funeral. It did not make any sense to me at all. They were in expensive cars and there was over a hundred people at my dad's funeral, all of them white, all wealthy. The only Mexicans at my dad's funeral were my dad's two brothers and me. My dad's wife was a fat white pig as well. My parents divorced in 1968 and my dad remarried to this desperate fat woman who bought my dad's love. That's another story that will be in my book I plan to write someday. Anyways, my point is I was so naive that when it happened to me it totally caught me so off guard and unexpected that I got the full impact of the attack.

October 5th, 1996, a little over a year into my sentence I was in Ad-Seg at Mule Creek State Prison because I wanted to do my time alone after my so-called northern homeboys sliced my throat at Corcoran Prison when I started my sentence in 1995 on a level 3 facility "C" yard. Supposedly I got hit by the homeboys because they asked me for my "paperwork" and I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. I had just paroled from New Folsom level four and I never seen the homeboys ask for "paperwork."

I always threw my court papers in the garbage, and whose business is it anyways? I didn't have it so they set me up and cut my throat on May 2, 1995. My blood saturated the dirt on that yard and I'm amazed I lived and lucky they missed my jugular vein. They got caught for it, too, and begged me to tell the COs it wasn't them. You know what? I felt sorry for them and told the COs they got the wrong guys. They begged me and shot me all kinds of them chocolate wafer bars, writing paper, stamped envelopes, coffee, soap, all kinds of goodies. They said it was a mistake, but after that I didn't trust anyone and I decided to do my time alone.

Besides, I'm not really from California, and all my real homeboys are in AZ, "Arizona." I was alone in my cell on October 5th, 1996, doing my normal program, sleep all day, stay up all night reading and studying law, cleaning and washing. I had just got a package from my mom. Cookies, coffee, chocolate Milky Way bars, Snickers, Cheez-Its, all kinds of love. I had just made myself a shot of Folgers and I didn't even get to drink it because of what happened. I ate

continued from previous page

my state lunch, a peanut butter sandwich. They give you the peanut butter in a styrofoam cup that they make. In Ad-Seg the COs pass out all the food, breakfast, bag lunch, and dinner. I never in my life ever gave it any thought that anything like this ever happened to anyone!

After I took a few bites from my peanut butter sandwich, I was reaching to take a sip of my coffee but stopped suddenly when I was unable to breathe. My ability to breathe was incapacitated. I panicked and tried to force myself to breathe, but all I could do was gasp. I immediately realized I was intentionally poisoned, but I couldn't believe it. The real shocking part of it was not that I was poisoned but that I was poisoned by the pieces of shizit I naively and ignorantly trusted the most. The mutha... COs. Pardon that word, people; I love and respect The Beat but some words can only describe the situation to give the reader the true sense of the writer's expression.

Anyways, that was what shocked me and scared me the most because I never ever expected to be murdered by the people my dad taught me to trust. In fact, my dad had a friend who was a Santa Clara County Sheriff who one day took me on patrol with him at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds during the County Fair and who used to take me and other kids out to get newspaper subscribers. When I realized I'd got poisoned, I started drinking as much water as I could in order to dilute the unknown toxin. Then I stuck my finger down my throat to gag and force myself to vomit. My mom taught us what to do if any of us kids ever got poisoned or to save each other by drinking milk and vomiting.

Since I didn't have milk, I used water and tried to throw up the poison. That was a big mistake. The poison was concentrated insecticide, the kind of insecticide you mix with water because it was potent. They intended to kill me. I almost went unconscious, blood started coming out of my stomach and when I started peeing, my kidneys were on fire and bleeding, too. I stayed in my cell for six days from October 5th to 11th in pain. My whole body in pain, I couldn't breathe or eat. I felt like my life was draining out of me and I was gonna die because my heart was pumping all that poison; my kidneys and liver were bleeding, too. I was perspiring and through my skin the odor of insecticide made me vomit.

I was drinking water to dilute and clean my blood. I couldn't tolerate the physical pain any longer or the psychological terror on the fifth day and I waited till late at night to tell the CO I need medical treatment because I suspected the early morning COs that serve breakfast and lunch of trying to kill me, and I wasn't gonna ask them to take me to the E.R. I was taken to the E.R. on October 8th and I was in tears telling the nurse I was poisoned with insecticide. They refused to believe me. They wanted me to tell them how I got poisoned. I refused to tell them the COs poisoned me because there were two COs there.

The nurses didn't believe me because they assumed there's no way I could get poisoned in Ad-Seg. I got sent back to my cell and because I was in tears the nurses wrote a mental health referral thinking it was a psychological problem. The following day a psychiatrist came to talk to me. I was handcuffed and taken out of my cell to a table in the unit and all the inmates were at their cell doors looking out at me. I sat there in tears; I couldn't help it, I was

terrified of dying and I told the psychiatrist the same thing you're reading. I told him the COs poisoned me. I thought him being a doctor he would have me examined. I begged him to order medical treatment, but he actually said to me don't worry, my liver and kidneys were probably damaged but I'll be OK.

I could not believe he said that. When he told the COs he was finished and I could go back to my cell, I refused and I started yelling, "You're a doctor. I need emergency medical treatment!" The COs grabbed my arm and said, "Let's go, Gonzales." I refused to budge and I kept yelling, "No, I need emergency medical treatment!" They dragged me to my cell, threw me in, closed the door holding me by the handcuffs. When the door was closed they jerked me back with my hands through the tray slot to remove the handcuffs. After they slammed the tray slot and left, I just put my head down and thought, "I ain't gonna make it tonight." I thought I was gonna die that night and I came to terms with my death and accepted it. I couldn't do nothing else.

I kept thinking how they were gonna find me dead in the morning and they were gonna get away with murdering me just like my dad's second wife got away with murdering him. I was thinking the government people would cover up my death as suicide and that even the coroner would write it off as suicide. No one would give a shhh and it would be over. I accepted it and came to peace with it in my heart. I didn't want to die a wuss begging for my life. I thought the only thing I have is my dignity and self-respect and they ain't getting that.

I made it through the night. I didn't believe it. I didn't sleep. All I did was walk back and forth all night in my cell. In the morning, after they served breakfast, I decided to get the hell out of my cell; one way or another I was gonna get medical attention. I started yelling out my door, "Man down! Man down!" I couldn't believe how the COs treated me. They ignored me and were just going about their business ignoring an inmate's yell for "Man down." I decided to take drastic measures. I got all of my paperwork and legal papers, Title 15 Rule Book, and toilet paper and crumpled it up by the door. I used a pencil lead to pop the electrical outlet in my cell and I lit a fire. I jumped up to the top bunk and put my face next to the vent in order to breathe. The heat from the fire was immense and soon as I lit it, the papers lit up like as if there was gasoline on them. It scared the shhh out of me. My heart was pounding because I am terrified of fire and I didn't realize lighting a fire in such a small space is dangerous. I don't recommend it, it's very dangerous.

However, the COs did run like hell to my cell and hit the alarm. Now they couldn't hide what they did or hide me because the alarm brought all kinds of COs, sergeants and lieutenants running to respond to the alarm. The COs got a bucket of water and put the fire out tossing the water underneath the door. There was a big gap underneath the door. There was a lot more smoke after the fire got put out and I was choking when a sergeant opened the tray slot and yelled for me to cuff up. I cuffed up and was taken out of the cell and locked in the shower handcuffed. An hour later a woman in civilian clothes came to ask me what was going on and why did I light my cell on fire.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

I told her the story and I asked her if she could order that I get medical attention for my liver and kidneys that still were bleeding. I was urinating blood. She was a psych tech. The COs told the mental health department that I tried to kill myself! I felt disgusted with what they were doing to me. The psych tech told me she would have me examined. I was taken to the infirmary and I told the nurse I need my liver and kidneys examined because they were bleeding. They did not give me medical treatment. They put me in a room in the hospital wing, took my clothes except for my boxer underwear and my t-shirt. There was a mattress and blanket in the room. The stainless steel toilet in the room had been shut off, as well as the cold and hot water buttons. I had no drinking water and couldn't flush the toilet.

I was outraged at the way they were acting towards me. They were putting things in my food and water. If I wanted water they had to give it to me. I didn't trust them so I didn't drink any water for three days and the only food I ate was whatever was in a sealed wrapper, like my boxed cereal, cookies, and chips. Thus far, I think you may believe me or not, but what I'm gonna tell you about that happened next is gonna seem unbelievable. It was so unreal my mind was refusing to believe what my eyes were witnessing. It happened the second night I was there.

I got a legal letter from the court that I had to sign for. The CO gave it to me without searching it and there was a paperclip enclosed. I used the paperclip to pop the electric outlet again and I lit the legal papers on fire by the door like I did in my cell in Ad-Seg. I was simply trying to be a pain in the butt to them now because no one would believe the COs tried to kill me, except Nurse Cruz. Yes, someone knew what "they" were doing to me and she used to slide graham crackers to me under the door to feed me because she knew I wasn't eating the food the COs were giving me or drinking the water they forced me to ask them for by cutting off the sink. I was taken out of the room in handcuffs after they put the fire out throwing water under the door. They cleaned the mess and put me back in the room.

For an unknown reason, call it deja vu or instinct, but after they took the cuffs off I walked to the toilet and looked in. Matter of fact, it was a healthy case of paranoia. What I saw in the toilet is exactly what made me look in the toilet for. There were two tablets in the toilet that reminded me of two white Tic Tacs. They were just beginning to bubble in the water they were in. Quickly I removed my boxers and t-shirt and crumpled them together in a ball and shoved it down the toilet; just kept shoving it in and stopped the tablets from exploding. They started bubbling like a 7-Up soda or Alka Seltzer tablets except these were miniature tablets, unlike the huge Alka Seltzer Plus. After I shoved my underclothes in the toilet, I stood there in the nude and looked back to the door where a female CO lieutenant and an old white man sergeant stood looking at me, then the toilet, at me, then the toilet. They were both standing there with their arms folded like they were waiting or expecting their tablets to still do whatever they do. Nothing happened and after awhile they left.

I stayed awake all night worried and nervous, trapped in a room with them tablets and feeling helpless. In the morning, "they" stuck it to me good. Tricked my a** good! I thought I would trick "them." In the morning when the

COs from the graveyard shift who put the tablets in the toilet went off duty, I planned to ask the morning shift to let me flush my toilet. First they served breakfast. When they picked up trash and trays, I told the CO I needed to flush my toilet. He told me after he's done he'll be back to turn the toilet on. When he returned he tells me he's gonna turn my toilet on and he looks at the toilet. Then he asks me what do I have in the toilet. My blanket was shoved in there, too; I shoved it in for extra protection because I knew what them tablets could do. For some reason I just knew this. The CO told me to take whatever it was out of the toilet before he turned it on.

I was scared as hell, but I didn't want him to notice my fear or nervousness and I took the blanket out of the toilet and tried to act normal. I even turned towards the door and gave a small laugh as if to say I didn't know why I had the blanket in the toilet, ha, ha. After that the CO had to open a little closet next to the room in order to go behind the toilet and turn the knob to allow me to flush. I couldn't see, but I could hear the CO put the key in the door and open it and walk into the walkway, turn the knob behind the toilet, then holler at me, "OK, flush." Quickly I put my finger on the flush button and took the boxers and t-shirt out of the toilet, and as the clothing was being lifted, I pressed the button as the clothes came out, and the tablets made a loud "bloop, bloop" popping noise. The toilet failed to flush. The CO closed the closet door and took off. I seen thick, dark, smokey clouds of fumes rising from the tablets in the water that were fizzing and I dropped to the floor and laid with my nose underneath the door.

The thick, dark smoke filled the room as I lie on the floor with my nose as far underneath the door as I could. The room was a hospital room with negative pressure, meaning that the air current sucked into rather than out of the room and because of that I was able to breathe air from the outside of the room that was not contaminated. I lied on the floor frozen in position on my stomach, nude, my face under the door, cherishing each and every breath because I didn't want to breathe whatever the hell them tablets were emitting with that smoke.

I stayed on the floor from around 8:30 in the morning, right after breakfast, all the way until it got dark outside. Because I am out of writing paper, I'm going to have to continue my story next time I get some paper. But I'll pick up where I left off. That night I took a deep breath and held it so I could turn my head and look if the smoke had dissipated. Slowly I got to my knees and then to my feet. There was a puddle of greasy urine on the floor because I had to pee lying down. The floor and walls had a brown greasy film coated on them and it was dark outside, so I figured it was around eight or nine p.m. I looked inside the toilet and noticed black scorch marks on the metal that the tablets made, and I touched the toilet bowl on the outside. It felt hot, like a barbecue grill that's cooling down after it's been used.

Then I noticed the bowl of raisins on the floor I had gotten for breakfast that morning. My heart started pounding at what the smoke fumes had done to the raisins. That's when I smelled my own flesh cooking inside me and felt my stomach bubble. I broke down and cried. That was just the beginning. (To be continued)

The Lost Cost

When commenting on political events of the world a disclaimer on my part is a must. My general knowledge about any particular issue—especially about what is taking place overseas, in Russia and Georgia—has to be prefixed with “what seems to be”, which is not necessarily “what it is”. God alone knows what is what, and who is responsible for the frequent chaos and mayhem in world events.

What is it to us, anyway? Everything, I believe: human tragedy cannot leave any person indifferent, since what separates “them” from “us” is only an accident of circumstances, not an ocean. Beneath high-powered diplomacy and executive decisions in any conflict there are irreversible, apocalyptic tragedies for every man, woman, and child who is bludgeoned from afar by politically-motivated decision-makers, of whom Lord Action said, “Power tends to corrupt. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Am I, a lifer, so far from this? Did I not experience a long murder trial, and did I not see the agonizing faces of the victim’s family? Did I share in their suffering, and did I show compassion in their pain—a pain I was personally responsible for?

No, I was too proud, and too busy trying to weasel out of a life sentence. There was no room for others—not even for my own family, whom I pushed out of my heart by my thoughtless actions on the way to prison.

So now, whenever I see clips of poor refugees, of war victims, it’s not my too-little, too-late crocodile tears that will fix or change anything, but a realization that I am partly responsible for the chaos in the world as a contributor to it. I have been unjust and have done serious evil to the innocent, and so when seeing tragedy, I usually see it from the perspective of the aggressor, who is often oblivious or simply indifferent to the suffering of others.

This recent Russia-Georgia conflict is just the latest example of how “national interests” true currency is the blood and tears of others rank-and-file civilians who have no influence over the short-sighted decisions of their “democratically-elected leaders”. It is tragic, because traditionally and historically, Georgia and Russia and the

Our very next writer doesn’t need much of an intro as he’s in our publication every week. His topics vary from week to week as he expresses deep political and religious beliefs. He’s a knowledgeable writer as you can tell by the depth in his writing. He doesn’t beat around the bush and gets straight to the point. He’s going to be locked up for the rest of his life and has already accepted his fate as trying to steer away as many people as he can from a negative mind set. So please give it up to Mikhail as he breaks it down for you readers from his cell in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Ossetians have had friendly relations, were often allies in other disputes, and are predominantly Orthodox Christian in faith.

It is tragic that the ethnic children of the Christian Church should go to war against one another—or against anyone, for that matter—with priests on both sides blessing their young sons on what may be their final journey on this side of eternity. What good can come of it? I am at a loss, but then again, who can make sense of what is really going on behind the doors of shady diplomatic dealings and all of that empty rhetoric?

May God have mercy on us all, and comfort not only the Georgian and Russian and Ossetian people, but also the poor and suffering people of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the oppressed people in China, and everywhere else where there is violence, injustice, and instability. I have purposely avoided laying blame to any single party in all of this. It is, they say, better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. And with blood on my own hands, am I in no position to blame?

Similar tragedies take place on American streets, in California prisons—senseless and thoughtless killing, which only shows that the real conflict is within ourselves. Social changes may change the setting, but what is that to an unchanged, unredeemed heart? And yet, even in a terrible setting, each person, with God’s help, is able to become a messenger of peace, a small beacon of light.

Is not that our ultimate calling as people? Isn’t that our responsibility? May God help us, and enable us to do what we can do, so that he may take care of the rest, both a far off and near! Please pray for the poor people all over the world who are travelling under the yoke of violence. Thank you.

Loving You

As I’m sitting in my cell going through your letters
 Wondering how did life get like this
 I slowly close my eyes and I can feel your kiss
 I wish I could be home with you, but I’m not
 ‘Cause one night I was on the street doing dirt and I got caught
 Now it look like I’m on my way to the state pen
 So I don’t know if I’ll ever feel your touch again
 In one night I lost a good thing
 So now all I can do is sit here and dream
 Life is just too short, so I’m going to say
 What I’ve got to say
 Baby Girl, I’m feeling you in every way
 I love the touch of your skin
 What I’m trying to say is “I love you” but I don’t know where to begin
 Every night I see you in my dreams
 It’s crazy ‘cause no matter what I’m going through
 Some way or another my thoughts come to you
 And when I was out there on the street running amuck
 I know at times it looked like I didn’t give a fluck
 But I was just doing what had to be done
 ‘Cause when I was out there on the streets
 I felt like I had no one
 I just wish I could go back in time
 So I could get this off my mind
 But what’s a man in my situation to do
 Just hope for the best and tell you I love you.

RAYMOND SALAZAR

Our next writer is writing to us from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, Ca. Raymond is an OG writer as he always seems to pen down some very creative writing. In his upcoming pieces he share a couple poems with you readers out there. His first poem is about Love and how he misses the person he loves very much. And his next poem is pretty much self explanatory as he breaks it down for you himself. So please give Raymond your attention and take a moment read some words from his heart.

A Quote or Saying

Watch your thoughts
 They become words
 Watch your words
 They become actions
 Watch your actions
 They become habits
 Watch your habits
 They become character
 Watch your character
 It becomes your destiny
 For your destiny
 Becomes your faith.

To The Beat and Readers

My name is Nightmare and I got something to share, as you would say. Today I struggle with my beliefs and with God. I just left Deuel Vocational Institution where all my friends were at---Chongo, Low Down, Neto, Kane, Petey Boy, and a few more, Frog, etc. And one more, Rabbit, aka Darron G., the one who got me into The Beat. Thanks, Rabb... I love it.

Now, down to biz... the reason for this letter is to say this; I'm not a devil worshipper. Today I went to church and it's because of them. Trip out, all of them are firm believers of the Lord. Today I can say it's 'cause of them that I am, too. So God bless you all on your time and I hope and have faith that one day we'll meet again in the House of the Lord.



Our next writer is writing to us from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, Ca. Nightmare has been a writer for The Beat Within for awhile now as he has never been shy to express his true feelings and emotions. He writes so all you readers out there can learn from his experiences. He writes about his own troubles, and struggles in life. Welcome back friend, we look forward to sharing this read, and future pieces you send our way!

Lost From?

If I was lost
Do you think you could find
All this shhh
That's killing me from the inside?
I've been beaten
I've been abused
I've been lied to
I've been used
I'd share my feelings
If I could
But I got this chip made of wood
That I carry with me everyday
I've been to groups
I've been to class
So all you guys can kiss my ass
This shhh I tell you is, oh, so real
Some of this shhh you don't even feel
I miss it out there
And I
Really want to go
But I can't go yet
Until I find Joe
He's here
There and everywhere
Last time I saw
Him
He was
Nightmare

Believer

Do I believe in this thing called sin?
Why am I comfortable in the pen?
I am safe and no one can blame me
But if I ask God will he save me
Save me from what?
I like it here
So why ask God?
I have no fear
But I got a family on the streets
I don't need them; I got The Beat
Being away can drive you crazy
Damn, I miss my baby (Angelina)
She is beautiful and I miss her so
So why stay here when I can go
Home to a place where I can rest in peace
Or
Home to a place where we all believe
Heaven is a place we all want to go
So if you ask God he will save your soul
I'm scared to say this, but I don't believe
I was left in a spot where I had to fend for myself
So I could not even think of anyone else
But I have faith that one day I'll change
And free myself from this cage.

Not Cool

Gang life is the topic
Some stay in and some drop out of it
I played the game and played it cool
Until that one day
I got played the fool
I was told to take the deal
Get there and see how it feels
If you don't like where you're at
Get off
'Cause maybe that yard is soft
I got there and played it cool
I got a job and went to school
It was not what they said it would be
It was cool, they had shady trees
More and more homies showed up
So we all kicked it tough
We became a family and helped each other
We weren't the same color
But we were brothers.
Well, to make this short without a doubt
Guess what--
I dropped out.
Hotel California
Dorm number one-oh-five.

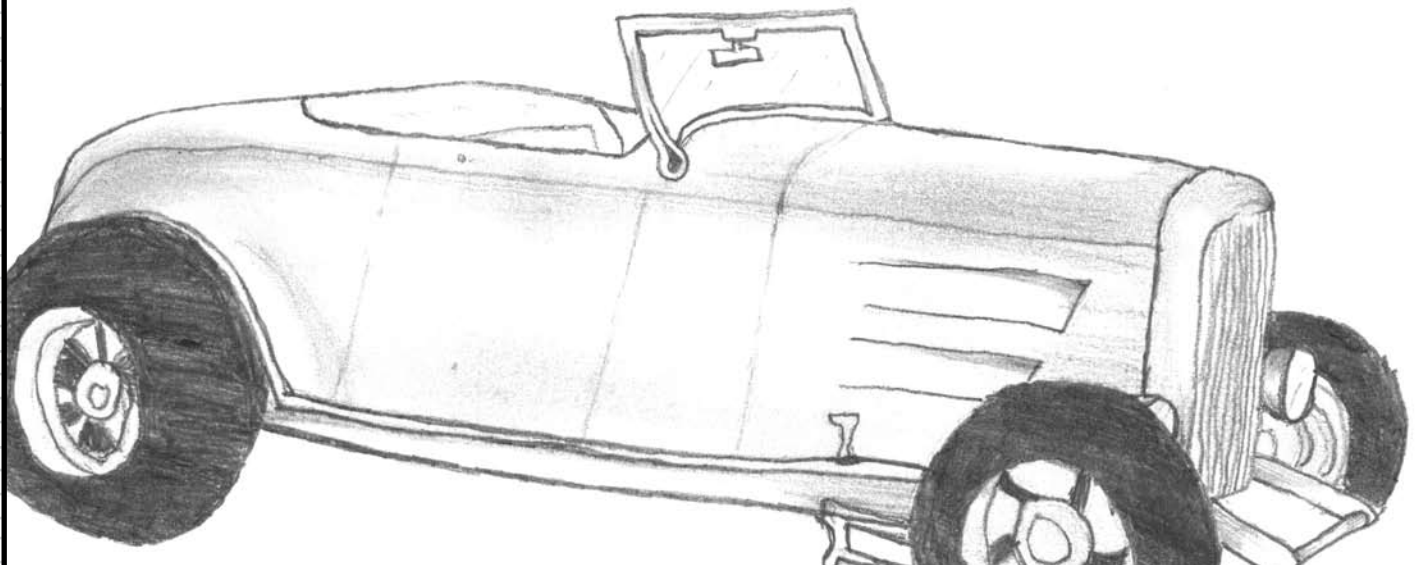
Caged

Caged
 Much like an animal
 My heart beats doing time
 Thoughts fly around in my head
 Like bats in a cave
 Where no sun shines
 My spirit begins to fade
 Hope wants to disappear
 Even what day it is
 Becomes cloudy and unclear
 My mood changes directions
 More than the wind
 Happy, sad, nice, mean
 And what about those horror flicks
 That invade my dreams
 I never imagined
 That prison
 Is where I'd settle down
 Full of grief and outta the game
 In here
 I'm recognized by a number
 Not by any given name
 I pray for my momma
 More
 'Cause only God knows
 If I'll ever
 Make it out that door
 I keep trying to understand
 What got me to choose
 This Hell
 For which I now reside
 What forbids my happiness
 My freedom
 I wasn't raised
 To be an outlaw nor a thug
 What ever happened
 to my pride
 Well
 life don't get much worse
 Than this
 Ready or not
 Granted with seventeen years
 To ponder
 I'm caged and Surrounded.

Our next writer is submitting his writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Mansfield, Tennessee. Thomas is not only a writer but an artist too. His descriptive writing can paint pictures just like his drawings. So give it up for Thomas as he expresses his emotions through the pages of The Beat! Welcome friend!

Dear Sweetbaby

I suffer from a condition
 that only your love can cure
 No drink, no drug
 Not even magic
 Can satisfy me with peace and happiness
 This I know for sure
 Baby
 I've never been more determined
 as I am now
 To exercise creative interest and charm
 You've inspired me
 to sing, whistle and dance
 Some say, "How strange"
 but I say, "Love"
 Not "How bizarre..."
 You and me
 Are an important topic that deserves
 True dedication
 To preserve our desire and passion
 I believe
 Intelligent conversation
 Decorated with an abundance of compassion
 Has sealed the attraction
 Darling it is true
 you've turned my world around
 And for the better, I explain
 From here on out
 It's sunshine and blue skies
 No more dark days inside
 My heart full of pain
 So if you will, "Promise me"
 you'll never fall behind
 Let's lead this pact together
 and take pleasure
 In each path we follow
 in a full lovers stride.



*I'm recognized by a number
Not by any given name
I pray for my momma
More
'Cause only God knows
If I'll ever
Make it out that door
I keep trying to understand
What got me to choose
This Hell
For which I now reside
What forbids my happiness
My freedom
I wasn't raised
To be an outlaw nor a thug
What ever happened
to my pride*

read the rest of Thomas Mansfield's BWO piece on page 63

